

BENOIST'S PLURIVERSUM

AN ETHNONATIONALIST CRITIQUE

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It is testament to *The Occidental Quarterly's* growing stature that it has elicited a major interview from one of Europe's foremost anti-liberal thinkers. For too long, America's nationalist right, indeed the right in general, has existed in an intellectual netherworld of free-marketeters (Wal-Mart *über Alles*), CIA intellectuals (Burnham/Buckley), Kirkian reactionaries, Bible-thumpers, and conspiracy nuts, all of whom, as Alain de Benoist notes in the above interview, defend a system that destroys the very things they seek to conserve. With *TOQ*, white nationalists, radical traditionalists, biological realists, and other anti-liberals take up a different project, as they endeavor to work out an intellectual synthesis of the latest science and the most primordial forms of European thought to address not just the failures of American conservatism, but the nation's historical-ontological tasks.

Benoist's oeuvre is a good place to begin the intellectual rearmament of America's nationalist right, for no postwar thinker has brought as much authority and acumen to his critique of the liberal system threatening the white race. The ideas with which he and the European New Right are associated have, however, still to find an audience in the Anglo-American world. The anti-intellectual, self-centered character of anglophone culture Benoist evokes to explain this paucity of interest might be questioned, but it is undoubtedly the case that his reputation among us rests on a small number of translated articles — a mere fraction of an opus comprising fifty books and several thousand articles — that have appeared in *Telos*, in *The Scorpion*, or on the Internet over the last decade or so. This, though, may at last be changing. In addition to *TOQ's* current interest, Ultra Press of Atlanta has just published the first English translation of a Benoist book; my *New Right, New Culture* makes an exposition and critique of his ideas comparable (I like to think) to Continental ones; and the Castilian website *Nueva Derecha* (<http://foster.20megsfree.com>), perhaps the most authoritative New Right archive, now contains more than 300 English-language articles.

I suspect *TOQ* readers will be impressed by the range, richness, and depth of Benoist's thought. Impression, however, is likely to be mixed with reservation — for reasons this short article hopes to provide. Like many of the great European opponents of the liberal-democratic regimes of money the United States imposed on defeated Europe in 1945, Benoist's anti-liberalism

descends from a tradition forced underground by the liberal-communist victors. Accepting the “biological realism” and “revolutionary conservatism” of this repressed legacy, the early GRECE (Groupement de recherche et d’études pour la civilisation européenne), under Benoist’s leadership, aimed at exposing the fraudulent foundations of the various postwar occupation governments installed by Washington. With an extraordinarily sharp pen and the support of an equally extraordinary group of collaborators (Louis Rougier, Giorgio Locchi, Guillaume Faye, Robert Steuckers, Pierre Krebs, among others), the young Benoist helped make GRECE an intellectual force – some would say, *the* intellectual force – on Europe’s anti-liberal right. Yet at the same time (and anglophone nationalists are less likely to realize this), he was no less responsible for leading the New Right into a dead end, compromising its project and making undue concessions to the liberalism he ostensibly opposes.

An article of this size is not the place to examine the origin and course of Benoist’s intellectual trajectory. But much of what is problematic in it is evident in the above interview, beginning with his comments on metapolitics. As the extant New Right literature of the 1970s documents, GRECE’s initial understanding of metapolitics was not the innocuous “transversal” of the so-called manifesto, but an explicitly Gramscian one, aimed at preparing the cultural revolution requisite to an antiliberal political revolution. As the young Benoist put it: without Marx, no Lenin. That is, without a revolutionary critique of the existing model of cultural subversion, a victorious assault on the citadels of liberal power would be unthinkable. Besides depoliticizing the New Right’s project, his redefinition now reduces metapolitics to an academic exercise, whose principal concern is promoting the “differentialist” world view which has shaped his thought since the 1980s.

In the optic of this differentialism, the world is a *pluriversum* of diverse peoples, cultures, and civilizations whose differences need defending from the leveling, homogenizing forces of liberalism’s global market. As his former colleague Guillaume Faye describes it (see “Ethnonationalism vs. Communitarianism: The Faye-Benoist Debate” at *Nueva Derecha*), this differentialist vision was born of a failed imagination. Following the media blitz of 1979, an ensuing period of inquisition sought to muzzle the various dissident expressions of New Right thought. To circumvent these censorious restraints and re-connect with the dominant discourse, Benoist opted to abandon his “compromising” ties to the right’s interwar heritage (especially its biological realism and antiegalitarianism), appropriating the language and principles of self-determination, diversity, and antiracism – that is, the pluralist principles of contemporary liberalism – to defend Europe from its biocultural enemies. Instead, then, of pursuing a metapolitical strategy whose assault on the regnant liberalism could neither be ignored nor dismissed, he sought to outmaneuver the liberals on their own turf – by recovering, diverting, and reversing their pluralistic discourse in the name of European “difference.” That this discourse,

with its abstract defense of identity, now compromises his own thought ought not, then, to surprise.

Specifically, his differentialism sought to transform the “rights” that Third World peoples had acquired in the fifties and sixties (rights, incidentally, which were the gift of Soviet and American efforts to subvert the old European empires) into universal principles that European peoples could use to defend their culture and *ethnos* without having to suffer the stigma of “racism” and “fascism.” As Faye points out, this “turn” began as a “ruse” to mobilize the system’s pluralistic principles against its race-mixing ambitions. (This would lead one French critic to characterize it as a “differentialist racism” — insofar as it made culture rather than race the principle of exclusion.) Ruse, though, morphed into commitment, as Benoist gradually succumbed to the pluralism inherent in this discourse, confusing what was intended as a clever political ploy with something inherently worthy of defense. Worse, he became increasingly complicit with the pluralism already subverting the European *ethnos*, assuming positions hardly distinguishable from the prevailing antiwhite ideologies of equality and human rights. This, in turn, led him to a communitarian liberalism supportive of multiculturalism (and, implicitly, multiracialism) and of those disputable postmodern notions of identity politics that view the system’s hyperconsumerist, ultra-individualistic, and permissive behaviors as symptomatic not of Europe’s decay, but of its future.

The negative ramifications of Benoist’s differentialism have been especially prominent in his understanding of race, immigration, and Americanism. While well read in the literature on human genetics and population studies, with many sensible things to say about them, particularly respecting their reductionist abuses, he nevertheless rejects the primacy of racial identity, contrasting his cultural differentialism to what Trotsky called “zoological materialism.” He is particularly convincing in arguing that racial factors have a low explanatory value, that human specificity is more social-historical than biological, and that the reductionist uses of genetics (in sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, for example) are as indefensible as those which ignore organic criteria. In making such an argument to criticize those who posit the primacy of their racial or biocultural identity, he nevertheless ends up flogging a dead horse — for even Hitler rejected the sort of racial determinism Benoist poses as the antipode to his own culturalism. More to the point, ethnonationalists, bioculturalists, and racial realists never see race as an end-all, because race to them is as much a matter of culture, history, and life as it is of biological classification. In the antideterminist formulation of the determinist Madison Grant: “Race implies hereditary and hereditary implies all the moral, social and intellectual characteristics and traits which are the springs of government and politics.” A people’s national character, in a word, is inseparable from the racial stocks undergirding it — even if one accepts that race and culture are causally linked only in the last instance. More seriously, Benoist rejects the identities and

commitments that racial stocks engender, and thus the preontological significations establishing the organic fundament of a people's existence. Those who defend their race as such defend not a crude biological reductionism, as Benoist contends, but the primacy of their genetic endowment in organically shaping their place in the world and, hence, in influencing everything else they think worth valuing. (As Aristotle put it, what is prior—in this case, one's racial ascription—is necessarily posterior.)

A similar form of reasoning leads Benoist to claim that the chief problem today is not the Third World's colonization of the white homelands, but the system promoting such ethnocidal policies. Again, he is at least partly correct to emphasize that the system's liberal capitalist tenets are indifferent to white racial survival (though I think it revealing that he has not a word for the Jewish "culture of critique" or the left's racial nihilism). It is quite another thing, however, to argue that the immigrants are not one of the pincer movements of global capital and that their occupation of our lands is not as threatening to our existence as the market strategies and corrupt government policies cooked up in the glass and steel office buildings of "New York, London, and Tel Aviv." By focusing exclusively on the anti-immigrationists' failure to grasp the social-structural basis of the non-white invasion, Benoist reveals something about his scheme of values—and this, apparently, has little to do with any pre-rational attachment, born of blood and kinship, to his people's genetic interests (an attachment, I should add, that is not to be confused with the intellectual narrowing that comes from what he calls "ethnocentrism").

Because he refuses to look behind the ideologically blurred surface of anti-immigrationist activism and treats it as merely another cultural disorder, he inadvertently disparages the life force this activity, however opaquely, reflects. He seems thus to disparage the instinctual defenses of European life because certain erroneous ideas have been associated with them, indicating that he favors theory over practice, thought over life. At the same time, he refuses to accept that whatever its ultimate cause, immigration poses the principal danger to future European generations: threatening, as it does, to replace the Continent's native population with a nonwhite one. As for the same danger to the whites of North America, he adopts an even more cavalier stance, siding with the country's aboriginal inhabitants, lambasting its previous racial standards, and accepting its Mexicanization with detached indifference. Though one might agree with his contention that anti-immigrationists are wrong to focus exclusively on the problems immigrants cause, only by dismissing or minimizing the immigrants' toxic effect on white communal life can it then be posited that racial differences are socially insignificant, that racial ascriptions are less constitutive of individual identity than social-cultural ones, or, most unacceptable of all, that the antiliberal's role is to identify with Kant's categorical imperative rather than with the particularistic imperatives of his people's existence. Having rejected the primacy of Europe's bioculture, it seems hardly

coincidental, then, that his differentialism becomes just another form of liberal pluralism, concerned not with the interests of *our* culture and *our* people, but with those of all the others.

I suspect Benoist would prefer an all-white Europe (i.e., a European Europe) to the multiracial/transnational one the Eurocrats envisage — he is, after all, an ardent champion of the European heritage. Nevertheless, the universalist postulates animating his *pluriversum* compel him to accommodate the Third World invasion and deride all who actually resist it. Those, like Faye, who have been persecuted by the system for criticizing the invaders and calling for a *Reconquista*, he accordingly dismisses as “crazies,” with the implication that they deserve the retribution they bring down on themselves. Again, this seems less the sentiment of an identitarian whose foremost concern is his people’s imminent extinction than the indifferent detachment of a “free-floating intellectual,” fixated on an economistic view of international labor markets, blind to the catastrophic racial effects of Third World immigration, and perhaps weary of offending the left intelligentsia. This, of course, is not to say that he is wrong in arguing that anti-immigrationists who refrain from opposing global capitalism would do better to keep their mouths shut. But to leave it at that (especially while championing “diversity”) neglects both the symbolic and practical significations of human behavior. (This was breath-takingly evident in an interview Benoist gave last year to the Italian New Right journal *Diorama*, where he ridiculed the French government’s effort to ban the Muslim head scarf from its schools, claiming this quintessential symbol of the invaders’ culture had not the slightest effect on the educational process — as if education were not about culture and French culture not dangerously menaced by Islam.) Indeed, the universalist pretences of his pluralism seem aimed at repudiating the actual (however limited) efforts of whoever resists the system’s subversions. This leads me to wonder if his overly intellectualized engagements are not “the petty and superfluous activity” that comes, as Heidegger argues, whenever theoretical or scientific activity is divorced from *praxis* — that is, whenever it is not treated as “a way of Being-in-the-world” and thus not understood as part of the existential process that puts life itself in critical perspective. But more than encouraging the dilettantish approach to immigration his position implies, Benoist seems not to realize that even when analytically wrong, anti-immigrationists are right in rallying to their people’s defense — just as the grand intellectual, despite his slightly larger though hardly flawless understanding, represents merely another bloodless objectivism justifying abstention from the skirmishes now slowing the enemy’s advance.

Likewise, there is much to criticize in Le Pen’s National Front, but Benoist’s one-sided critique of it has the effect of disparaging the antisystem politics with which he allegedly identifies. For within the optic of his critique, little weight is given to the fact that the semitotalitarian character of the Holocaust-worshipping New Class regimes dominating Europe dictates that dissident political formations

take positions and propound principles that compromise with the system (just as Benoist himself does whenever he is allowed into the “public sphere,” at *France-Culture*, for instance, to pose a bit of “negativity” to the reigning ideas). To essentialize these compromises, while slighting the antisystem positions the National Front takes on immigration (as well as on populist resistance to EU social engineering and the globalists’ cosmo-capitalism), inevitably stigmatizes whatever antisystem politics it is possible to practice under present circumstances. His skewed view of the National Front (this “collection of malcontents”) likewise affects his critique of its anti-immigrationism. He claims, for instance, that everything that can be done to halt immigration has been done and that the only workable solution is to eliminate the system sustaining the international labor markets responsible for mixing disparate populations. In effect, the fatalistic prescription of this “Olympian” view posits an ideal of fundamental change (which is perfectly cogent) but simultaneously dismisses all struggles – such as those waged by the National Front – which might actually prefigure such a radical transformation. To insist, moreover, that the present regime has tried to limit immigration or to accept at face value the meager measures already taken seems perverse, for in fact nothing of real consequence has been done, and to say otherwise simply accommodates the ongoing subversion.

But more than minimizing the problems of immigration, Benoist surreptitiously legitimates the Third World’s invasion. For like those “anti-individualist” (and largely Jewish) liberals in the United States who call themselves “communitarians,” he advocates a “salad bowl” model of Europe, with both Europeans and non-European interlopers entitled to form communities based on their distinct cultural identities – somewhat in the way the Ottomans’ despotic millet system allowed subjugated Greek, Armenian, and Serbian Christians to maintain their ethnoreligious institutions, as they were dispossessed of most else. Similarly, he dismisses the role of race and civilization as historical forces, downplaying not only the biocultural clashes that have slashed and scarred the world’s history since Antiquity, but the fact that many of the most important conflicts in today’s world remain biocultural in nature (as they are fought out between Serbs and “Turks,” Armenians and Azeris, Indians and Pakistanis, Russians and Chechens, Arabs and Jews, etc.).

Finally, a word on his anti-Americanism. Perhaps because I lack the same appreciation the *TOQ* editors have for American civilization, I accept much of Benoist’s critique of it and his argument that, as the preeminent exemplar of liberal modernity, it is inherently destructive of its own heritage. At moments, I have even argued that in rallying to a government and a president whose open borders/free trade/unilateralist policies represent a reckless assault on the heritage bequeathed by their forefathers, white Americans have never so lived up to Mencken’s characterization of them as a bunch of “goose-stepping serfs.” But condemnation of a civilization whose Calvinist economic mania

demotes biocultural identities and denies its defining traditions hardly implies, as Benoist assumes, that Americans are qualitatively different from continental Europeans – that their 400 years in the New World outweighs their previous 30,000 years – or that the blood of Achilles, Cuchulainn, and Roland no longer flows through their veins. While it is undoubtedly true that much of contemporary American culture lacks anything worth preserving and that its elites, having no “discernible sense of history and culture,” wage a scorched-earth campaign on the vestiges of its European heritage, America is neither simply an unfortunate experiment in European liberalism nor the global vanguard of antiwhite subversion (though it is both). For however cretinized and misled, its white populace represents – if only potentially – a still not insignificant expression of European life and hence one of the forces which might give rise to another flourishing cycle of European civilization.

Like their counterparts in Canada, Australia, Argentina, Chile, South Africa, and New Zealand, America’s white inhabitants are the blood descendants of Mother Europe. Though the westernmost peninsula of Eurasia served as the original European homeland, today “Europe” exists wherever white men exist. As one of our more indomitable comrades (Kyle McDermott) puts it: “I am a white man. Put me on the moon and you know what I’d be? – A white man on the moon.” In this spirit, Heidegger points out that “Americanism is something European” – and something that is more than Benoist’s cultureless, economic enterprise, more also than “the nation of nations,” “the first universal nation,” or “the proposition nation” of the multiculturalists and the antiwhite elites. Thus, however different its course, America remains an organic extension of Europe. This ought to be evident to the most superficial student of U.S. history: For early in the country’s growth there emerged a distinct national tradition, with several hundred years of history to its youthful credit; there were established specifically American institutions more Celtic and Anglo-Protestant than Puritan in form; but, above all, there arose a national consciousness rooted in the North European, specifically Anglo-Celtic, racial stocks of its founders. Though the country’s settlers lacked Europe’s ancient genealogy, cultural legacy, territorial sense, and distinct ethnic consciousness (all of which disposed their twentieth-century descendants to the most extreme cultural inversions), they nevertheless spoke a European language, practiced a European religion, had a history shaped by the nation-creating influences of Europe’s High Culture, and, most important of all, took their North European racial identity as the defining part of their collective identity. In Jared Taylor’s phrase, America until quite recently was “a self-consciously European, majority-white nation.” That is, it was a nativist variant of the European nations which had spawned it.

That modern America, especially its leviathan state and deculturated elites, practices a genocidal anti-Europeanism goes without saying. The country’s political and cultural betrayals are not, however, the decisive issue. (For haven’t Europeans, subject these last sixty years to the same American

media and “culture,” also betrayed themselves? And weren’t Russians, now recognized as the foremost bulwark of white existence, once, when ruled by Jewish Bolsheviks, *the* force for global subversion?) From an ethnonationalist perspective, what counts is not America’s anti-white state, but the blood of its white populace, the language, heritage, and achievements of its creators, and the self-consciously European aspirations of its biocultural defenders. Though America’s empire and liberal “way of life” may threaten the European biosphere today, European-Americans are still one (if not the most important) of Europe’s organic offshoots – with an unmistakable interest not in Washington’s anti-white policies, but in the actualization of Europe’s destiny. Thus, when the Americophobic Benoist disingenuously claims he is not an Americophobe, but refuses to recognize the primacy of the American people’s European origins and proposes a European alliance with the Third World, including its jihadists, to counter it, it is almost as if he denies what makes Europe European.

A talented and prolific writer of immense learning who played a leading role in mobilizing the intellectual opposition to the liberal-democratic regimes of money imposed on postwar Europe, Benoist was originally one of us. Even in absorbing many of the liberal postulates he formally criticizes and hence ending up in one of the New Right’s culs-de-sac, his work still elicits our interest. Yet while recognizing and continuing to profit from his incomparable literary achievement, it is crucial to the life-and-death struggle we nationalists wage to realize that whatever is vital or pertinent in the New Right’s legacy has been vitiated by his *pluriversum*.

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