


# Understanding Anti-Americanism

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## 1. The Field of Anti-Americanism

A poster on our street exhorts us to “Demonstrate for Independence in Iraq, End US Occupation, Stop Corporate Looting . . . Free Palestine” and to “Bring Candles.” The odd array of causes is not random, but neither is its organizing principle immediately apparent. Beyond the issue of the rightness of these particular causes, one apparent invariant is the arch-cause that organizes these causes, what can only be termed “anti-Americanism.” In a world of uncertainties, the last certitude would be the attachment of any contingent cause to the broader sense-making cause of an attack on the United States. The phenomenon of anti-Americanism is so widespread that we are blinded by its sheer ubiquity, by its organizing ability. It will be the task of this essay to carry forward the task of understanding it, which is to say, not just to identify its key histories and varieties, but also to do this so as to understand what *kind* of thing it is. 

The idea that there is a widespread anti-Americanism worthy of investigation is obviously not our own. Recently, it was proposed directly by James W. Ceaser. His essay, “A Genealogy of Anti-Americanism” outlines five broadly chronological aspects of anti-Americanism. These are a degeneracy myth, a racialist myth, a claim that the US is soulless and consumerist, and the idea that it is technologically dominated. Ceaser’s essay is a useful attempt to assay, indeed to open, a field. But he brings us no closer to an understanding of what *kind of thing* anti-Americanism is in each of the variants he explores. That is, beyond their existence as metropolitan negations of America as such, we need to wonder what it is that organizes them as a field. Like Ceaser, we consider the early modern history of the US and its relations with Europe; like him we work with examples of anti-Americanism; but we do so in order to understand what sort of thing-or things-anti-Americanism might be. In this respect, a short sketch of the “paradox” of anti-Americanism by David Burchell is closer to what we seek to understand. In a newspaper column, he wrote that “in its heart of hearts anti-Americanism is a profoundly American movement” (17). Even though he does not

explore the logics of this claim beyond responses to Woodrow Wilson and the antics of the anti-Vietnam generation, this is an important and obvious observation. The very fact that it is so obvious and yet, as he says, so “unremarked” is itself indicative of the intensities of the cultural forces at work.

2

Some who read the title of our work will have already set our views aside as American apologism; we have not the space to be detained by this. We must leave to others (such as Ceaser) the task of showing that there exists an anti-Americanism, or more precisely, that there exists an anti-Americanism which is *only incidentally related to the empirical deeds or structures of the US*. That all cultures and countries attract and sometimes deserve criticisms we fully accept. But anti-Americanism is far more than this. It is heir to a tradition in which—as we will see in this essay—“the good” has become unspeakable, thanks not so much to postmodernism as to a transfer of the sacred from kingship to the body politic and the self. The good is now unspeakable, a silent vortex. It exists only as the ghost of its opposite, evil; a rhetoric of denunciation prevails at every level: among nations and leaders (the evil incarnate: Hitler, Pol Pot, Saddam...), across nations (terrorists, “Westerners”); within nations (sexual predators, drug pushers...). The sign of the moral is pure negation in a society unable to state its moral good. Denunciation of the US is, above all else, a *moral activity*.

In his *Sources of the Self: the Making of Moral Identity*, Charles Taylor has observed a powerful disjunction between the Enlightenment’s actual sources of moral value and those its modern inheritors are able to attribute to it. He remarks that not only are the theories “all strangely inarticulate” *as theories*, but also, that the only capacity for judgment left available to them is denunciatory in character:

Now none of this can be openly recognized. How can utilitarians have access to their moral sources? What are the words of power they can pronounce? Plainly these are the passages in which the goods are invoked without being recognized . . . they consist mainly of the polemical passages in which error, superstition, fraud, and religion are denounced. What they are denounced for lacking, or for suppressing, or for destroying expresses what we who attack them are moved by and cherish. This becomes a recognizable feature of the whole class of modern positions which descends from the radical Enlightenment. Because their moral sources are unavowable, they are mainly invoked in polemic. Their principal words of power are denunciatory. (339) (Cf. MacIntyre 51-60)

This observation is a particularly brilliant and insightful moment of Taylor’s magisterial analysis. Commenting on intellectuals in particular, Jean Bethke Elshtain has remarked that

“to be an intellectual, you have to be *against* it, whatever *it* is. The intellectual is a negator. Affirmation is not in his or her vocabulary” (71). In our view, anti-Americanism is a central part of this wider moral order. It partakes in this history, as confirming moral negation, and yet in that very moment, as potential self-idealization and realization.


Despite its moral intensity, some anti-Americanism is so habitual that it has become ritualized. It is especially possible to observe the ritual dimensions of anti-American practices in the patterns of mechanical gesture and repetition. These rituals are but ethical structures that have been forgotten. For anti-Americanism, deeply held (be it passionately or as an unwitting field organizing other ideas), is an ethical-esthetic structure with a long provenance. It has served many functions, and has gone under other names. At its most superficial, at the level at which it is usually proposed in fact, anti-Americanism is the successor to a family tree of oppositionalities: be they against the king, the empire, the capitalist system, the West. But these all have an esthetic quality that is discernible in the West itself: they are all instances of Romantic disavowal-structures characterized by figures of rebellious alienation, predicated self-characterizations of marginality (belying one’s actual centrality).<sup>(1)</sup> Romanticism, then emerges as the second deeper inflection of each form of oppositionality. This is the structure that is obviously identifiable with all anti-Americanisms.

3

Guiding our inquiry throughout is the thought of anti-Americanism as an *anthropoetically* definable structure, an esthetic-ethical phenomenon. Instead of asking, as Ceaser does, why it is that people have anti-American attitudes, and then explaining it by tying to other strands of history, we seek to understand what anti-Americanism is, as an anthropoetically defined axiological (ethical and esthetic) structure. We begin with aspects of how it evolved, not so much for history’s sake, but in order later in the essay to see what it does, how it works. Because if our contention that anti-Americanism is a complex structure of autocritique is correct, then it is a foundational dimension of contemporary society, and as such, so far from constituting an attack on distinct or overlapping American and / or Western values, it is actually an attempt, witting or no, to reinforce them.

## **2. Current Empire Theory as Dominant form of Anti-Americanism**

And still the caricature glares out: Uncle Sam, with his finger pointing out to each and every citizen to enlist. The poster tells us to “Rally on American Independence Day.” Such is the construction of July 4, Independence Day, that it now stands for everything anti-American. Or does it? For in its own way, the poster cites foundational American values in its demand for “independence” for Iraq, for the “free” Palestine and the end of “occupation.” These,

surely, are the values of the American republic, perhaps of republicanism itself. Yet, the dominant form of anti-Americanism today is one that involves seeing the US as the hub of a giant Empire. 

In the post-imperial phase of the twentieth century, especially after 1945, the claim that the US was an imperial power was advanced by its superpower rival, the USSR. But the demise of the communist bloc has not led to the demise of this claim. On the contrary, there has been a gathering of strength in the link between anti-American sentiments and the more or less loosely expressed idea that the US is an empire. The US is increasingly being depicted not merely as a large wealthy nation at the hub of other similar if less powerful nations, but rather as an imperial force that imposes its will on others, whether it be by force, culture, economy, or even its MacDonalD's chain of restaurants. If we are to understand the current form of anti-Americanism, we must understand not only why this claim is made, but also, why it is wrong.

Under the banner headline, "Blindly, a New Empire Strikes Back" (a paper delivered to a writer's festival under the title "American Empire: Politics and Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"), Christopher Kremmer argues that

the new American empire, born in the ruins of the twin towers, Afghanistan, and Iraq has yet to be formally announced. This may be due to the child's uncertain paternity. George Bush and Osama bin Laden can both credibly lay claim to be the father . . . as an empire, the US behaves much like other empires in the past. It's often said that it is a reluctant empire . . . . Nevertheless, imperial thinking permeates its foreign policy, especially towards the Middle East. (13)

4

For Kremmer, the pattern is already established:

History will judge that America failed to define the nature of its new empire when it had the opportunity to do so after the end of the Cold War in 1991. It allowed bin Laden to define it for them. Meanwhile, the American emperor concentrated on settling a personal score with the leader of Iraq. (13)

There are a couple of things to note about these two passages. First, the idea of a US empire as a literal, rather than figural or metaphorical, structure is striking. That is, a concrete claim of this kind is quite different from, for example, Peter Sloterdijk's warning of the dangers of the US moving towards an imperial formation, of it "playing Livingstone"

(and seeing “Europe” with its actual imperial experience as having something to offer in the way of wisdom to a difficult world system) (73). Second, empire rhetoric allows a series of “eternal laws” to be brought into play. These are entirely mythic—but they shut down thought itself. We witness the foreclosure of a “history” before it even happens (an empire that, in this version, was founded less than ten years ago is already being given history’s obituary): history will have judged that America failed. Now this could, and indeed should, be seen as naïve. But it is much more widespread than this example. Michael Ignatieff, a writer of some profundity on human rights, offers the same cautionary morality tale for the US:

the twenty-first century imperialism is a new invention in the annals of political science, an empire lite, a global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known. It is the imperialism of people who remember that their country secured its independence by revolt against an empire, and who like to think of themselves as a friend of freedom everywhere. It is an empire without consciousness of itself as such, constantly shocked that its good intentions arouse resentment abroad. But that does not make it any less of an empire. (3)

This then would be the empire that does not know its name. The fact that the claim is often made does not make it any the less strange. For Ignatieff, as for Kremmer, the next step is the forecast of doom:

To call America the new Rome is at once to recall Rome’s glory and its eventual fate at the hands of the barbarians. A confident and carefree republic—the city on a hill, whose people have always believed they are immune from history’s harms—now has to confront not just an unending imperial destiny but the remote possibility that seems to haunt the history of empires: hubris followed by defeat. (4)(2)

It is strange how readily such critics fall into Spengleresque images of decline and fall, replete presumably with that great writer’s vision of the fellaheen huddled like cavemen in the ruins of the great skyscrapers, building with the shards of former glory.

We cannot accept the proposition that the US is either imperial in character or is in any substantive sense an empire. Calling the US nation an empire, however, is a platform shared by the most potent and solemn anti-Americanisms we know, and we must examine the claim, and illustrate an obvious counter-hypothesis to show how to think it otherwise. But before discounting the argument, we can already say how this variety of anti-Americanism works.

In the first instance, the imperative to call the US an empire is no more than the need to call it by the name that will hurt it most. Closely linked to this, secondly, the desire to call the US an empire embodies a dream that, simply by asserting a historical framework, it will precipitate the reality of US decline and fall. But if we look more carefully, finally, we see that it is in the truest sense also a developing autocritique, that is, it is an unwitting *continuation* of the US project of declaring independence, liberty, and justice for all who live under tyranny. Just as the Jeffersonian declaration slowly extended its logic beyond the small circle of wealthy white men who made it in good faith, so has the ongoing autocritique extended beyond the consideration of domestic politics to the world beyond. That, put bluntly, is what it is, what it is for, and what it does.

5

This brings us to the book *Empire* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The authors open their book with the kind of feint that characterizes its hypocritically grand revolutionary style. That is, they open with an argument that calls attention to the multi-polar structure of the current world:

Our basic hypothesis, however, that a new imperial form of sovereignty has emerged contradicts both these views [of the US as good or bad world leader]. *The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project.* Imperialism is over. (xiii-xiv; italics in original)

This is correct. But the authors then embark on what turns out to be the most bizarre anti-Americanism of all: an insistence based on a word-play that despite the fact the US is not itself an imperial power, there nevertheless exists a new empire. These are what they claim to characterize it: a total territorial claim, a self-conception as an ahistorical order, an attempt to rule human nature itself, and a project of universal peace (xiv-xv). They then further insist that theirs is not a mere metaphor of empire, but the word is being used as a “concept” (xiv). From this eccentric position, the book reels between moments of insight and highly romanticized discussions of resistance and capitalism (this begins early; see for instance, the discussion where a reasonably coherent summary of Foucault’s notion of biopower is succeeded by a transcoding into the way “Deleuze and Guattari develop this perspective even more clearly”) (25).

*Empire* is a book that is being taken extremely seriously, and it is one of the first supposedly scholarly attempts to explain the logics of the current world system. But it rests on a thin historical basis, partly because of what is little more than an etymological quirk on the one hand, and mainly because the things attributed to empire-as-general-concept are only to be found in their assertions about the current situation. Perhaps the most important moment in the book is when their big idea, the link between a transformed sovereignty and empire, is

brought into the orbit of the idea of the republic:

The idea of sovereignty as an expansive power in networks is poised on the hinge that links the principle of a democratic republic to the idea of Empire. Empires can only be conceived as a universal republic [*sic!*], a network of power and counter-power structured in a boundless and inclusive architecture. (166)

For Hardt and Negri, the official nineteenth century of European colonial acquisition as *imperialist policy* is to be distinguished from empire as such. The idea looks attractive. As academics, we are familiar with that sort of sophistry that deceives critical sensibilities with clever stratagems. Such in many regards is this book, even at this founding moment. It is true that the word “imperialist” enters certain European languages not via the main Latin root but via English in the nineteenth century, and that it does so as the name for the overt project of securing colonies all round the world. But this narrow point leads them—perhaps deliberately—to misconstrue the whole. If we read the above passage carefully, certain operational issues emerge. The claim that “Empire can only be conceived as a universal republic” is a particularly strange instance of reverse predication of something the authors encountered as a problem that needed sweeping aside: that is, we have come, via a still-unfolding history, to exist in a diverse and multi-polar republicanism we still think of as “Western”; this republicanism may have analogies with former orders of governance, including recent imperialisms and the empires of antiquity, but the thing that is operational in the above passage is not imperialism, but *the new contractual basis of society*, what even Hardt and Negri briefly name here as the principle of *democratic republicanism*. In the above formulation, issues of democracy and republicanism are central; sovereignty, rivalry, and interlinkage are relevant; issues of imperialism are not even operational, except perhaps by analogy.

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Our objection to their formulation, therefore, lies in what sort of thing they imagine empire to be. Hardt and Negri claim to use the word *empire* as a concept, not a metaphor. At risk of banality, we must make a couple of obvious points. If one is to make a claim of this kind, we have the right to expect that there will be at least a minimal relationship between the category and the object being categorized. Given indeed that by its self-representation, the US is not only not an empire, but a modern republican nation state, the onus would be on those who seek to argue otherwise to demonstrate their claims. An empire, minimally defined, requires a single, if sometimes-rarely-devolved structure of government, a shared military, and a defined and limited territory. Beyond this most minimal of definitions, we would also expect to be included some of these features: a single currency or fiscal structure, an imperial rhetoric, a central court or justice system, and, as the name implies, an emperor. One could find as many parallels between the US and a Pacific island as

between that country and an empire: the claim is in obvious need of justification and mere repetition will not make it come true. All empires, even split empires like the Eastern and Western Empires, had centers, favored points, and often stories of self-represented origin. Their claim that the concept of empire is characterized “fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire rule has no limits” could refer to the propensity of imperial centers to seek endless expansion. This seems to be the point of the bizarre attempt to make the extensions of the US frontiers stand for imperialism. But in the present era, Hardt and Negri believe such expansion is no longer possible. By this logic, *their* logic, the age of empires would have run out of room (even if we accepted the thesis that the US frontier was imperial—we do not). If they are referring to actual territory, which is the only valid definition in our view, then the criterion is wrong: the Roman Empire, like the British Empire, *did* have limits. Then, we have referred to the claim that empire involves biopower. Let us, for the sake of coherence and protection of the shards of their argument, keep this claim at the level on which Foucault proposed it. If we accept Foucault’s argument about the present situation (and while we do not entirely share this view, this is not the place to contest it), then it applies today, but not to the deep past. In consequence, biopower cannot be used as part of the general definition of what constitutes empire, unless one means by that to disqualify all previous empire formations from the purview of the definition. This is also true of the claim about peace. The claim may apply today, in a UN framed, post-French-revolutionary rights context, but it does not apply to previous empires. The other criteria they use to found the definition apply as well to recent empires as to antiquity, and in fact do no more than establish patterns of influence and power.

We very much regret the decision they took not to explore the notion of empire *as metaphor*. That might at least have been *interesting* otherwise than as a symptom of anti-Americanism. Contrary to the oddly strategic idiom of the book (and Deleuze and Guattari from which its worst aspects appear to flow) metaphors and analogies are powerful tools of thought. Their chief value lies not just in the parallels they establish, *but in the tensions that arise from their limitations*. We fully accept the fact that certain links can be made with empires of antiquity (the idea of an order), with modern empires (the rivalries of nations, the rise of the ethos of a civilizing mission, etc.) and, we would suggest, with the only half-imperial Macedonian Alexander, whose fleeting star illuminated the supersession of one Greek pole by another, like the US for Britain. But these empire-analogies are only as good as the productive tension they set for lines of thinking. Sometimes, the weaker claim is stronger. And sometimes, as in this case, a less radical position is more telling.

7

What unites all the writers we have looked at so far is a haste to condemn either the *US as part of the West* by calling it an empire (Hardt and Negri) or more transparently, a haste to call the *US itself* an imperial power (Ignatieff, Sloterdijk, Sontag, Berman, *et alia*). The latter tendency is by far the more common, and it finds its way into journalese very readily.



Witness the anti-Americanism even in the offensive title “A New Imperialism Cooked Up over a Texan Barbecue”:

The Richard Haass formulation, echoing so resonantly that of Robert Cooper, looks set to become a basic text of coming decades. If the campaign against global terror is to last as long as Donald Rumsfeld predicted . . . the new unsovereignty of nations will soon be as central to daily life as the UN charter. The imperial idea, however benignly refashioned, cannot be allowed to slide into orthodoxy. (Young 2)

In this more common variant of anti-Americanism, the coupling with empire is used to suggest that national sovereignty should transcend international values, that there is a world-wide process (the campaign against “global terror”) that is hastening the issue, and that in this case, there is a “plan” to develop a new imperialism. Empire theory is manifestly an example of anti-Americanism, one that dominates the field today; we’ve seen, however, that it is predicated on a construal of empire so idiosyncratic that the word itself loses its referentiality. Contrary to the claims of the empire theorists, we believe we can accept the US’s own claim to be a modern republic; it now time for us to see what this involves.

### **3. The System of Modern Republics**

The US is a modern republic. By *modern* we mean both that it has the cultural form of the modern nation state and that it is heir to the economic systems of modernity; by *republic*, we mean that modern form of government that derives its sovereignty not from divine-sacred kingship, but from a sacralized body-politic. Much of the work of showing this has been done by the historian, Benedict Anderson, whose brilliant but sometimes unbalanced book, *Imagined Communities*, shows just what a modern “thing” nation is, not to mention the US role in its development:

It is difficult today to recreate in the imagination a condition of life in which the nation was felt to be something utterly new. But so it was in that epoch. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 makes absolutely no reference to Christopher Columbus, Roanoke, or the Pilgrim Fathers, nor are the grounds put forward to justify independence in any way “historical” . . . A profound feeling that a radical break with the past was occurring . . . spread rapidly. (193)

Anderson sees the modern nation as invented in the Americas and “*paralleled* in the old” (192). Modern nations might, as Anderson puts it, have visions of permanence, antiquity, and territoriality, but they are “imagined communities” (cultural constructs, imagined as

limited, sovereign, and partaking in a deep horizontal comradeship of community) (6-7). That they *can* be imagined at all is a function of modernity; hence his claim that the nation-state is a new sort of “thing.” For Anderson, the marking off of an older imperial order is self-evident, even if its trappings lingered well after its theoretical demise.

8

Anderson’s observations on the republic are more intuitive and less systematic. But he is more correct than he realizes when he claims that the new form is emphatically republican. He remarks that nothing confirms the “cultural revolution” (of new economic and political doctrines) “more than the pervasive *republicanism* of the newly independent communities” (51). Later he adds, “This independence, the fact it was a *republican* independence, was felt to be something absolutely unprecedented, yet at the same time, once in existence, absolutely reasonable” (192). Anderson on both occasions emphasizes the word republican, grasping its significance, but not exploring it on its own terms. In emphasizing what he merely notes, that the Americas produced nations that are not only anti-imperial, but a quite new formation, we say again that this is not compatible with the values of empire. Anderson also argues that the new republican nation is bathed in blood, not just in its moment of foundation, but internally, as in the US civil war. Even if his method differs, he grasps the Girardian point that sacrificial logics come into play with the new body politic. But we depart from Anderson in terms of the issue of genesis of the new form, even if his careful analysis is far closer to understanding the current world situation than anything the empire theorists have produced, or are likely to produce.

We do not accept Anderson’s thesis that the modern republic arose exclusively (in the sense of originated) in the settler-colonies and not in the metropolitan societies that sent them. We do not seek to reverse Anderson’s argument by saying the converse of course. For us, America was neither completely removed from the European context nor immersed in it; one might even suggest that it emerged out of a certain European political sensibility that Europe itself was never quite able to articulate and carry out. For instance, the last paragraph of the American Declaration draws directly on Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*. The framers also drew heavily on Montesquieu insofar as he saw Christianity as a stranger to despotic power. (See, for instance, Montesquieu 2: 121-34; see also Wernick, esp. p. 183, and Siedentop 11-15). What we wish to point out, then, is the event-structure repeated over and over again in the act of colonization itself—with consequences on all points of the triangle (metropole-colonizer, settler-colonizer, and colonized). Anderson actually describes the scene of an “awed” Marco Polo witnessing Kublai Khan (16). His point that the Europeans were ontologically shocked by the discovery of the many non-Christian societies and ways of constructing the world is crucial. In another context, Michel de Certeau, citing Pascal, says

From a religious viewpoint, *doubt*, the great problem of the time [the seventeenth century] is linked to division everywhere. From Montaigne to Pascal, all meditation is invaded by the doubt to which plurality gives birth: "I see several contrary religions, and consequently all are false" writes Pascal. (151)

The abbreviation of this *Pensée* cuts off "excepté une" (202); and Pascal's thought is at least partly devoted to justifying Christ, so Certeau is hardly exemplary in his citation. But the point that a mood of "apologetics" proliferates is correct, even in the case of Pascal, and his link to the scene of colonization is also apt and profound. The point we are making is that the scene of the genesis of Western modernity, not to mention republicanism and the nation, is the plural vis-à-vis of colonization, and this scene includes all three points of the triangle. When Anderson sets aside the extraordinary convulsion that racked England in the seventeenth century, we take issue with him, even as a historian.

9

We therefore propose a subsidiary hypothesis: the first republic was a vision of seventeenth century England. It was a minoritarian vision, unsuccessful and unrealized. Preceding communism, it was the vision of many of Cromwell's footsoldiers, the Levelers. Its brief appearance as a specter was a function of extraordinary debate about what a commonwealth in fact was. In seventeenth-century England, in other words, the values of the new social contract emerge in a way unthinkable in Aristotle or even the Roman historians. Indeed, these values are strongly echoed in writers forced to declare for the first time the basis of civil society. What is remarkable about the following passage written by William Temple in 1672 is not the position held, *but the fact it has to be stated*:

Thus the Father, by a natural Right as well as Authority, becomes a Governour in this little State: and if his life be long, and his generations many (as well as those of his Children) He grows the Governour or King of a Nation and is indeed *pater patrie*, as the best Kings are, and as all should be; and as those which are not, are yet content to be called. (65-66)

The very attempt to establish natural foundations by recourse to argument is the index of the change. Later in the same book, Temple admits that when the "Father comes to lose his Authority" then government by a body (Aristocracy) or by a select few (Oligarchy) follows on the basis of "Authority contracting to it self"; if both these fail, as when "the Children of the Family grows into the manners and qualities, and perhaps the condition and poverty of servants," then "Democracy or popular state, which is nearest confusion, or Anarchy; and often runs into it" results (75-76). The view is often characterized as conservative. Others, such as Locke or to a lesser extent Hobbes, put forward views that questioned the role of

kings more openly. In the course of articulating his view for a commonwealth, Hobbes, who offered what amounted to a new contractual value for kingship (rather than one based on divine right) suggests there are three kinds: the monarchy (representative of one), the democracy (representative of all that come together), and aristocracy (the assembly of a part) (23.105).

But what are all these writers actually *doing*? Beyond the particularities of their arguments, each finds a need for a minimal hypothesis, for a hypothesis of origin (of the social order) in fact. For none of the writers is civil society able to be thought about except in terms of *a posteriori* self-evident recourse to the circumstances of the present, and of known history. This is the scene of Western modernity, the modern republic. Even if we set aside the sentiments of the minority in the ranks of Cromwell's levelers, the seizure of power in the mid-seventeenth century is itself the first act of confirmation of the new structure. Taking power, even as Lord Protector, severs forever the link between the person of the king and the sacred. Henceforth, the sacred is to be invested in sovereignty itself, be it the Parliament Cromwell briefly elevated, or the *office* of sovereign. Henceforth too, contractual representativeness displaces the sacred order of kingship: this is achieved by literally scapegoating the King. Robert Hamerton-Kelly writes of this that

There is no essential difference between the sovereignty of the king and the sovereignty of the people. In both cases sovereignty arises from a metaphorical contract that threatens death to anyone who violates it . . . The transition from royal to popular sovereignty is a transformation of the basic pattern of victim and group. The two poles of King and crowd become the single pole of the crowd governing itself . . . Royal power becomes popular sovereignty and divine right becomes civil religion. (68-69)

So it does. The Girardian insight in this passage has to do with the sacrificial logics that underpin both forms of socio-political order (which, of course, doesn't make them equivalent). It is a handy reminder to those in democratic societies that they too are subject to sacrificial structures, that sovereignty continues to exist as a sacred value. The democratic republics sacrifice the kings in their various myths of origin (Cf. Girard, *The Scapegoat* 12-23). But the displacement is important in the history of the republics: even if they are governed by the same deep sacrificial logics, the rise of the republics sacralizes contractuality and in the US, as we will see, the structure of the covenant.

10

England's republican adventure appears to *fail*. The phenomenon of the Restoration (and much later in France) is not just a return to the prior situation. In fact, no return is possible. The restored monarchy, unlike the one that was overthrown in 1649, *is itself contractually*

*based*. Where previous monarchs were embodied sacred figures, their overthrow by other monarchical pretenders (as in 1066) was one thing. The overthrow on the basis of justice, spirituality, and the English nation was quite another. Once it occurred, the previous situation could not be restored. This co-occurs with the advent of modernity and ultimately republican multipolarity. This multipolarity is realized when the fullest realization of the republic finally emerges, when the King is executed in rapid succession in the US and France. England's king is "executed" in the Declaration of Independence as a consequence of the "history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having, as direct object, the establishment of an absolute tyranny over those states," with the "facts" submitted to a "candid world," a court of public opinion surmised by Thomas Jefferson (1). This is the special triumph of the US: the successful installation of a sacred body politic, on whom and for whom all sacrifices will be made. With the overthrow of the French monarchy thirteen years later, the pattern is internationalized into a world system, what Anderson calls a "blueprint" not just for tearaway colonies, but to the metropolitan homelands themselves.


The West is not a singularity, still less an empire. If its modern genesis is able to be articulated in the few pages above, if the self-hatred that permeates it will need a few more below, what perhaps does need articulation is a grasp of its *form*. That this is itself derivative of the genesis we have sketched goes without saying: the nodes of the West are those of trade and culture. But our antidote to the perceived US "hegemony" theory would be an adaptation of one of the founders of mass communication theory, Harold Lasswell. Lasswell argued that we need to distinguish between a public and an attention aggregate. A public is one that has direct involvement in things that affect it, as in a voting public. An attention aggregate is one that includes (for instance) the US as part of its frame of reference, but has no role in decision-making. So an attention aggregate might include everyone in the world familiar with the image of the Statue of Liberty. The West, and the US to the extent that it is seen as dominant in it, has something of the character of an attention aggregate: it appears in many people's skies, as an orientation and set of ideas. When the West is linked to that wider horizon, it is possible for people from many places to engage in dialogue. That sites like the US figure prominently in world attention aggregates, however defined, is obvious and presumably worthy of study. But studies of this kind will not, we fear, share in the rich sweetly resentful hot-house scents of empire theories.

If what we've surmised in the section is correct, we must inquire into the practice of anti-Americanism in a new way. When writers like Hardt and Negri, for instance, want to attack the US as a Western hegemon, they do so with the poise of the rebel-revolutionary; they wish to be republicans standing up against the global empire. As alienated rebels, however, theirs is the posture of the alienated Romantic. For republicanism is an ongoing project, be it in the US or abroad. Its cachet is the revolutionary, from Dick Wittington to Che Guevara. But there is one aspect of US republicanism that is starkly different from its rival varieties; this is its claim, ever since its inception as a remote colony, that it had a central moral purpose.

## 4. City on a Hill

Our consideration of anti-American empire theory reveals the US as the pre-eminent republic in a larger system of republics. This system, founded as it is on the social contractuality of a people's rights, is founded also substantially on resistance to empire. The critique itself has two forms. The first, the generalized ethical auto-critique of Westernness can be traced through Judaeo-Christian Europe to modernity where questions are posed about contemporary practices in the light of values of justice and dignity. The second, republican form, which is not only critique but also promise of resistance, is the continuing becoming of the republic in its oppositionality. In the first critical mode, America is a convenient scapegoat for substantially identical republics; in the second, American traditions of resistance turn upon America itself, in a logic at once inexorable, unnoticed, and yet in our view entirely explicable. We have showed in the previous section how America exists among the republics, how it is in fact a contractual republic. In this section, we look at how the American form of that contract allowed foundational resistance to empires to turn upon itself *as empire*.

After his visit to America in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville famously remarked "I think I can see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who landed on those shores" (*Democracy* 279). That Puritan was, of course, John Winthrop (1588-1649), first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, a man whom the historian Perry Miller claims to stand "at the beginning of our [American] consciousness" (in Bellah, 310). In 1630, heading toward New England on board the ship *Arbella*, Winthrop delivered what must undoubtedly be the best known sermon in the history of the United States—"A Model of Christian Charity." In this famous (and, for some, infamous) oration, he proclaimed to fellow settlers their destiny: "for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us."

As a succession of writers from Louis Hartz onward have suggested, the Puritan  English "fragment" has had lasting consequences in the conception of the American socio-political order. Indeed, the Mayflower Compact of 1620 expressed the foundation of a civil body politic founded on a covenantal logic. Although often breezed over now, this document represents an extraordinary assertion of independence and power. It is remarkable document for its time by virtue of its enactment of the idea that the settlers could simply found a community of their own free will (without the imprimatur of the authorities of the Church of England); additionally, well before the Declaration, the Mayflower Compact embodied a highly articulated model of participatory democracy and challenge to arbitrary and despotic rule (Smith 62-9).

We are not simply talking about the presence of a certain level of "Christian sentiment" in

the documents of the time. By the mid seventeenth-century, for instance, Puritan codes of law had contained rudimentary bills of rights. M. Stanton Evans: "In an amazingly brief interval, the founders of New England had created most of the features of representative, balanced government" which included a theory of constitutionalism, annual elections with an expansive franchise, power wielded by consent, a bicameral legislature, local autonomies, and a Bill of Rights (Evans 201). When Winthrop wrote that "wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us," his words were prescient. In view of how important that city on the hill has become, however, the legacy is complex.

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To put this in terms with which readers of *Anthropoetics* would be familiar, Winthrop was here claiming centrality for the new colony—operating via an allusion to a statement Jesus made to those gathered in front of him in Matthew 5:14. In military or strategic terms at least, America was at this time certainly *not* the center, but this rhetorical move could be plausibly described as "prophetic," given the current state of international politics; the eyes of all people are indeed upon them. Considerably later, in 1832, Hegel claimed that "America is . . . the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of World History shall reveal itself" (*The Philosophy of History*86). These might, superficially at least, be seen as roughly analogous claims; but there is a considerable difference between Winthrop's and Hegel's assertions, one that is irreducible to putative variations in semantic content. The difference lies, rather, in the position of the *locutor* in relation to that content: where Hegel's claim is made on behalf of an inquisitive alien, Winthrop is making the same claim for his *own* community. If, to other minds, Hegel's sin is hyperbole, then Winthrop's is the far more serious one of *conceit*. Of all the real and putative sins committed by the United States in its extraordinarily complex history, perhaps one stands out as the most offensive, especially in terms of contemporary sensibilities: its propensity for claiming the center.

Additionally, the position of the locutor in the case of Winthrop has also allowed (and, indeed, continues to allow) others to claim *marginality* in relation to America. Winthrop's claim and others akin to it have been seen, as Larry Siedentop remarks in a somewhat different context, as little else than "aggressive and vulgar self-advertisement" (*Democracy in Europe* 173). The reading implied here attributes to the US what one might call a "Ptolemaic" political cosmology—an assertion regarding America's belief that the rest of the world does, and in fact *should*, simply revolve around it. No doubt, this captures elements of a certain American conceit; but as true as this may be, it depicts as well the arrogance of *all* modern polities, including those most vocally and vigorously opposed to American influence.

As we have seen, the expressive force and logic of Winthrop's claim allude also to the explicitly *covenantal* form of American domestic political rhetoric and organization. Although Benedict Anderson is right to emphasize the genuine radicality of the American

Declaration, what his account is in danger of obscuring are the very real links between the American “revolutionaries” and the Puritan context in which their ideas took root and were nourished during the preceding one-hundred-fifty years. No doubt, we often hear—in somewhat general terms—that Puritanism was a huge force in the founding of the American republic: of those who declared independence in 1776, seventy-five percent were Puritans. But mere demographics don’t capture of the contours of the ideological landscape; and neither do those easily rendered burlesques of the US Puritan—that “thin-lipped New Englander who passed “blue laws” against all innocent pleasures, his only pastime being to hang witches” (Barzun 261). While, in other words, it is sometimes conceded that Winthrop and Puritanism more generally lie at the origins of American self-consciousness, it is rarer to see any investigation of what this *means*—of how, for instance, Puritanism gave impetus and shape to American democracy, a legacy still shared insofar as Americans share a common moral vocabulary derived from the “first language.” (Bellah; cf. Sandoz 98-101). Contrary to popular belief, the Puritan settlements should not be seen as “theocracies,” but as embodying the principles of local democratic rule; churches, for instance, were run by locals. Everything demanded public acceptance; consent of all members: “The Puritan experiment demanded that every morally capable adult give his positive and knowing assent to the imperatives issued in pulpit and press. Though it sounds strange to say it, few societies in Western culture have ever depended more thoroughly or more self-consciously on the consent of their members than the allegedly repressive “theocracies” of early New England” (Foster 156. Cf. Siedentop 172-3).

13

The kinds of image that Barzun lampoons are those that read seventeenth-century Puritanism as politically conservative, even “reactionary.” But as work by such scholars as Michael Walzer has amply demonstrated, such readings do scant justice to the historical context, which bears out the close links between Puritanism and the origins of what we now think of as radical politics (see, for instance, Walzer’s *The Revolution of the Saints*). Indeed, American Puritanism (including Winthrop) shared in the “revolutionary potentials” common to reformed Protestantism more generally (Foster 162). Winthrop and fellow Puritans expressed serious reservations about the arbitrary, persecutory and despotic political climate around them—to little avail (in the short term, at least): indeed, shortly before the formation of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629, Charles I showed his resolve to rule as an absolute monarch. After the departure of the American settlers, Puritans sought equality in the British Parliament during the English Civil War (1642-45), a project which was quashed but revived again by figures such as John Locke in the latter part of the century. Knowing this context allows us to make sense of Edmund Burke’s ominous warning to the British Parliament, as they sped headlong towards war in 1775, that the religion found “in our Northern colonies is a refinement on the principle of resistance.”

Although America pioneered the famous “separation of church and state,” this separation



should not allow us to overlook the enormously powerful influence religion has on American politics. (And it is the context outlined above—relating to the struggle for Puritan rights in England—that we can see that the separation aimed towards freedom *of* religion, not freedom *from* religion). Indeed, it has been claimed, with considerable evidence, that “Americanism” *per se* emerges with the religious revivalism called the “Great Awakening” beginning in 1730s, a movement that precipitates the emergence of an American national consciousness by the 1760s (Sandoz 99). Again, it needs to be pointed out that American evangelical revivalism was defiant, anti-establishment—it contested despotic political rule, even—indeed, especially—as this was incarnated in Church authority; the Great Awakening both generated and expressed a kind of pre-revolutionary fervor which sought to protect minorities and the dictates of personal conscience (Bonomi 156-8, 186, 216). The notion of “freedom” was central to Puritan self-understanding, particularly freedom of the citizen from arbitrarily imposed state action and freedom of the press (Foster 158). But as Bellah has surmised, the persistence and privileging of this rhetoric in certain forms has operated in such a way as to delimit freedom negatively: one is free *of* or *from* something (not free *to* do something). In other words, many Americans find it difficult to locate an ethical content to their freedom; they have a much stronger sense of what they are up *against* than what they are *for*—which is, of course, also a feature of anti-Americanism, including those to which we now turn, those versions of anti-Americanism that *seem* to come from without.

## 5. The End of the West?

We have taken for granted the existence of a system of networked republics whose values interweave, coalesce, and compete. We have suggested that the most important orders of anti-Americanism are to be found within this system. But as the events of the World Trade Center bombing of 2001 indicate, there are sites, cultures, and societies that lie beneath the shadow of the republics without necessarily sharing in their accomplishments or values. It is tempting, as many have since 2001, to think about this as a structure of difference, of utter alienation. However, we suggest that much of the difference is only apparent. The limits and ends of the West themselves need exploring in a new way. For example, in terms of the West’s own self-analysis, what have sometimes been taken as signs of its imminent demise have turned out, in fact, to be signs of its internationalization. We can see now that the independence and liberation movements which precipitated decolonization, for instance, relied not just on a repudiation of the West but, crucially, on the deployment of the West’s own ethico-political resources as a central tenet (and justification) of the resistance itself. In the earlier part of this century, considerable rhetorical energy was directed to prophesying (and lamenting) the imminent decline of the West and the rising of the USSR. We have seen in our discussions of empire theory that there are still those who persist in this form of thought. We begin, therefore, not with the bombing with the World Trade Center as an example of resistance to the US, but with the discourse of postcolonialism. ❏

In our exploration of anti-Americanism, we have seen a division between that anti-Americanism which is a generalized anti-Western critique founded on certain ethical reflexes, and that anti-Americanism which is specifically modern and republican, founded on the resistance by the Founding Fathers to the imperial world. In postcolonial discourses we find a similarly bifurcated structure. Typically, by its own account, postcolonialism is divided between concerns centered on independence on the one hand and concerns with specific sites on the other. This is usually presented in terms of an "evolution": at first, "early" postcolonial theory explored a self-evident problem of relationship between the ex-colonized and ex-colonizing powers. Often discussed in terms of hegemonic theory, the role of the West reflected a hated past, the obverse of a hoped-for future. "Later" postcolonial theory pointed to a need to stop defining issues in Western terms, leading to a range of projects from the genuinely interesting local account or history to attempts to find indigenous human rights or sciences. The second formation seemed to come after the first. That is, independence-related literatures were theorized in the mid-twentieth century as new literatures or ex-colonial literatures, so one set of concerns about the West and colonization were explored. But as the terms of these were defined by Western-ness, so a subsequent generation appeared to define new knowledges in non-Western ways.

Or so it seemed. For these two structures are functions of one another, different parts of a whole they each imply, rather than existing *as* alternative wholes. To take an example, Edward Said's *Orientalism* presented a version of the first kind of analysis. He explored a relationship between the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizer in history. The thesis of *Orientalism* was that the West had for centuries reduced the East to a fantasy on which to stage its illusions, constructing thereby the Oriental as the binary opposite of the Westerner:

Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, "devoid of energy and initiative," much given to "fulsome flattery," "intrigue," cunning and unkindness to animals . . . Orientals are inveterate liars, they are "lethargic and suspicious" and in everything oppose the clarity, directness and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race. (38-39)

The value of Said's text was that it showed how an ensemble of culture and discourse actually worked in tandem with the military and economic machines of the day to secure a seamless European reality in which Western identity was assured and confirmed through negative affirmation of everything the supposed Oriental was not. But in offering this understanding, Said hoped to effect change both by understanding history, and in seeing the persistence of patterns that need questioning (as when he critiqued Henry Kissinger) (46). However, Said is himself accused of totalizing the Oriental, of being a liberal humanist, of staying within the thought-frame of the West (for a useful summary of such critiques, see

Gandhi 64ff.). If the most vitriolic attacks on Said come from within postcolonial theory, this is because he is seen as being somehow aligned with the West, in his method, in his choice of subject, in his moderate claims. In a haunting interview with Tariq Ali conducted when he learned he had leukemia, Said shows himself to be more at home in New York than anywhere else, to have had a background that favored Western arts, and to have detested Jerusalem. Said, then, was in many ways in and of the West, and this, in our view, *is not a criticism*. To complete this circle, we have only to look at Gandhi's remark that the move to actual site-specific histories effectively marginalizes the third world all over again:

the first world academy is now involved, as Spivak puts it, "in the construction of a new object of investigation-'the third world', 'the marginal'-for institutional validation and certification." Far from being disinterested, this investigation testifies in many ways to the persisting Western interest in the classification, analysis and production of what we might call "exotic culture." (59-60)

15

The reading posits a crisis in which the apparent breakthrough into local cultures produces an echo of an earlier structure. But the crisis is no more than apparent, it being more a state of stasis in which the two fields are coterminous parts of the same field. They each concern a relation of alignment with Western-ness, neither precluding the other. The variety typified by Said constructs its inquiry in terms of the adequateness of the Western definition of experience; "marginal" studies seek specificities, and do so as long as marginal studies are, in Girardian terms, central to what Western academies actually require of them. The discipline structure of the American university might be described as that of a "settler culture" that seeks ongoing "identity-work" from its indigenous inhabitants. This desire to break out of the orbit of the West is itself a Western structure. Commenting on multiculturalism, Gil Bailie remarks: "There is nothing more distinctively "Western" than the current debate over multiculturalism. The debate is simply Western culture doing what it has always done. It is Western culture losing its life in order to find it, surrendering its cultural specificity in a specifically Western way" (9). Thus, the gap between the two phases of postcoloniality is very often illusory.

This division also concerns academic activism. Frantz Fanon, the revolutionary from Martinique in Algeria, proffers one version of resistance; Said, the critic perusing the works of European classics, offers another. In this respect, Gandhi has remarked that

postcolonialism is not alone or eccentric in its bias toward academic criticism-thinkers from within leftist traditions have always defended the public responsibilities of the intellectual figure . . . Yet . . . postcolonialism's investment

in its intellectuals has been bitterly contested by its antagonists. (54-55)

But whether in the moment of independence struggle, or in the effort to build a world that is more just, this picture takes little account of the role of the West's own autocritique in the process of decolonization and international justice respectively. The outcomes in Vietnam were not the sole product of military struggle, but also of a struggle inside the US and its allies at the time. At least part of what postcolonialism involves is the framework of internationalized Western ideas, ranging from "Marxism" in that case, to liberty and social justice. Postcolonialism in this respect often names an aspiration that relates to the Declaration of Independence itself: the right to self-determination, to liberty, freedom, justice, and happiness. In this sense, the discomfiture of postcolonial critics is understandable, for they are advancing arguments that are based on Western ideals; often, postcolonialism is *itself* a Western formation, the West's auto-critique. Far from disqualifying it from analysis, this should be seen as part of its analytic of alignment. On the one hand, such fields of study that search for ever more specific locatedness or for ever more extreme activist positions may be doing so as part of an unwitting recuperation of the center by their very marginal status (a romantic Western preoccupation). Conversely, the field that articulates a relation to the West risks being discarded as not having the panache or style of authenticity (even if it does engage meaningfully in analysis). In this respect, to bring a number of points made in this essay into play at once, when Said criticizes his place of residence, the US, for having become a world empire with a long Orientalist orientation (293), he makes the same mistake as his great nemesis, Aijaz Ahmad, who wrote of his sense of "solidarity with his beleaguered location in the midst of imperial America. For Edward Said is not only a cultural critic, he is a Palestinian" (160). Where Said writes from within the US, Ahmad writes from without; but where Said writes from within Western liberalism, Ahmad's choice is Marxism, itself, in its very generalization, a world system and Western idiom. As we have seen, however, neither wrote from within an empire, although both were old enough to remember childhoods within one.

16

This brings us to the consequences and structures of resistance themselves. Like postcoloniality, the World Trade Center attack is seen as a case of resistance to the West. But now, two years later, it is clear that the West has never been stronger, more resolute, and that at the center of such resolve is the US itself. In this regard, we will not be analyzing the circumstances that so enraged the perpetrators that they thought an assault on civilians justifiable on the one hand, or the multiple tragedies that enfolded those directly affected by it on the other. Our inquiry, rather, is into the structure of anti-Americanism that underpinned its planning and execution.

Analysts of the event have proposed endless theories of alienation of Islam, of the

irremediable difference of cultures and religions. Perhaps, however, these differences can be overstated; it is even easier to overstate the differences between those who attacked the World Trade Center and “ordinary Americans.” In relation to the attack itself, Girard has made other important observations about the orders of resemblance that characterized the attack:

The error is to reason within categories of “difference” when the root of all conflicts is rather “competition,” mimetic rules between persons, countries, cultures. Competition is the desire to imitate the other in order to gain the same thing he or she has, by violence if need be . . . . When I read the first documents of Bin Laden . . . I felt at first that I was in a dimension that transcends Islam . . . . Under the label of Islam we found a will to rally and mobilize an entire third world of those frustrated and of victims in their relations of mimetic rivalry with the West. But the towers destroyed had as many foreigners as Americans. By their effectiveness, by the sophistication of the means employed, by the knowledge that they had of the United States, by their training, were not the authors of the attack at least somewhat American? (Cf. McKenna)

The simplicity of this claim, its astonishing aptness and timeliness, has not led to it being taken up. Instead, the difference discourse continued in its breathless, pseudo-surprised way, unabated.

Some would be quick to label the Girardian analysis ethnocentric: after all, is this not a *mimesis in the idiom of one copying the other*? To this we say: sometimes, but not necessarily. First, *mimesis* is a process, and as when two hands reach for the same object, it does not require one to have precedence over the other. Shared goals are often at stake. Second, when it is a case of one imitating another, this is also a two-way prospect. In the response of the US and its allies, there are symmetries that further the mimetic relation. The resolve of the jihadis was directed against an enemy reputed by Bin Laden to be a paper tiger. The response was swift and merciless. Early speeches by George W. Bush made clear the terms of the ongoing reprisal. What happened in those first moments of response was, at least in part, a mimetic engagement on the terms on which the towers themselves had been attacked.

## **6. Concluding Unscientific Postscript**

We take for granted that such a thing as anti-Americanism exists; we leave to others the task of contesting this presupposition. Anti-Americanism is occasionally a powerful and enabling ethical and moral discourse; often, however, this is not the case. Such value as it has—when it has it—lies in its dimension as an ethical auto-critique, provided that this auto-

critique engages with empirical structures and deeds of the US.

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The history of the republics themselves has led to a perversion of certain Western auto-critiques into an anti-Americanism that has lost touch with its reasons for existence: to make the West better, perhaps wiser. We hold that the history of the US itself played into this formation, as the resistance to monarchical despotism precipitated a valorization of resistance per se. The US *itself* produces a variety of anti-Americanisms, which if understood correctly, appear otherwise than their own self-characterizations. Needless to say, many are taken in by this. Such flimsy arrangements as “empire theory” exemplify this pattern, existing as little more than structures of denunciation of the US, they are the purest (if also the most perverse and unwitting) form of Americanization the world has ever seen.

We have explored historical dimensions of anti-Americanism; we have suggested some of its dominant varieties. What remains to be explored is how it actually works as a system today. It is one thing to see how it has come into being; it is quite another to grasp it operationally. Let us then proffer, in lieu of a conclusion, a series of large-but tentative-suppositions:

Anti-Americanism is *unself-aware*. It should be clear, then, that the problem with anti-Americanism is not that it critiques America, but that it fails to comprehend the moral, historical, and rhetorical origins of its denunciation.<sup>(3)</sup> Further, this repudiation of what it is implicitly beholden to actually *depends* on not being aware of this beholdenness, the presence of a kind of misrecognition that is integral to its functioning.

Despite its shortcomings, anti-Americanism has the *potential* to stage itself as a source of valuable ethical critique. Anti-Americanism *gets in the way* of critiquing America if only because it never truly encounters its object-or indeed itself. Despite this, its high ethical aim can accompany productive engagement.

There are several varieties of auto-critique, all of them interrelated in practice. The oldest form of anti-Americanism is a legacy of the Judaeo-Christian West; it is deeply imbricated in the practice of ethical acts of self-questioning.

As the name suggests, anti-Americanism is constituted by oppositionality (the romantic, the revolutionary). We see this even when the discourse is masked in empire-rhetoric. If Rudyard Kipling’s true paeans to the Empire seem tame compared to the impassioned lyricism of Pericles’ Athens or Virgil’s Rome, then there is infinite distance again between all of these and Sontag’s, Mailer’s, and Vidal’s America (all of which, in any case, amount to very much the same thing). More than anything, the latter three’s invectives evoke nothing if not the Founding Father’s Jeremiads against Old World Despotism. This is why America’s revolutionary history meant that it knew no “conservative” political tradition like a post-Burkean England (indeed the very term “conservative” was not admitted into domestic

political discourse *except as a pejorative* until the end of the 1960s) (Nisbet 94-5).

Anti-Americanism emerges from the mimetic rivalries of the republics: "The deep suspicion of American influence which runs through the French political class also reflects a growing cultural insecurity in France—for, paradoxically, despite official suspicion and even hostility to the United States, popular culture in France is probably more open to American influence than that of any other European country. From jazz, through films, to male fashions, American models reign supreme in France, to the discomfiture of the French political and cultural élite" (Siedentop 172).

America functions as a scapegoat; but this is not equivalent to maintaining that America is somehow *innocent* (although we could say that—at least in some instances—its guilt or moral culpability is unexceptional): it's that determinations of its culpability are all too often detached from considerations of empirical historical or political deeds.

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## Notes

1. In the case of the United States itself this portrait will need later qualification. See section 4 below. ([back](#))
  2. Others who project such empire fantasies include Lieven (1-2); Sontag (5); Freedland; Kupchan (in Hansen); and Berman. ([back](#))
  3. In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor criticizes contemporary moral philosophy for its inability or unwillingness to examine the presence and richness of its own moral sources. Indeed, he notes that we can repudiate these sources and still be beholden to them (339). ([back](#))
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