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MULTISCALAR NARRATIVE IDENTITIES: INDIVIDUAL AND NATION, EUROPE AND EURASIA

ABSTRACT

The paper explores narratives of identity on multiple scales between the individual and the Eurasian landmass, taking the various identities of Cracow-born anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski as a leitmotiv to illustrate the main arguments. Apart from being a cultural Pole and an Austrian (later British) subject, Malinowski was a typical European intellectual of his age. At the end of his life in the United States, he appealed to the values of European civilization to overcome the Nazi horrors. Subjectively he identified strongly with Poland, even though his career was built elsewhere. We could say that Poland was his *Gemeinschaft*. Although we can only speculate on what he would say today about neoliberal political economy and the construction of an ever more rigorously demarcated 'Fortress Europe', the author argues that Malinowski's emphasis on the values of European civilization was ethnocentric. It is important to correct Eurocentrism by recognizing the commonalities of civilizations across the Eurasian landmass.

Key words: Eurasia, Bronisław Malinowski, Jack Goody, European narratives, narrative identities, *Gemeinschaft*, world society

Słowa kluczowe: Eurazja, Bronisław Malinowski, Jack Goody, europejskie narracje, narracyjne tożsamości, *Gemeinschaft*, *Weltgesellschaft*

INTRODUCTION

The influence of narrative theories originating in the Humanities and Cultural Studies on Social Sciences such as Political Science, Psychology, and Social Anthropology has been expanding for several decades. This trend shows no sign of weakening. The concept of 'identity' is ubiquitous in the context of pervasive 'constructivism'. Europe is a good case in point. Who would dare to apply anything other than a constructivist epistemology in analysing the trajectory of an old name originating in the classical Mediterranean, which was revived in a specific way in the barbarian north-west in the Middle Ages, before acquiring in the 'early modern' period the (never precisely specified) territorial connotations it still carries in the 21st century? The significance of narrative constructions is laid bare in the explicit way in which institutions such as the Museum of European Cultures in Brussels are promoted by the European Union (EU). In popular parlance and perception, especially in European countries not yet admitted to membership, the EU *is* Europe. But interesting ambiguities can be found in peripheral locations within the EU itself: for many Bulgarians and Romanians, 'Europe' means the Schengen zone, to which their countries do not belong. Hungary and Poland do belong, but significant numbers of citizens of these countries nonetheless construct Europe as being somewhere else. Sometimes Europe refers to the Eurozone, to which there is little prospect that more eastern European countries will be admitted in the near future.

We have learned, then, that narrative constructions or 'discourses' are important in constituting social reality. At the same time, however, scholars with a 'realist' penchant insist on the need to ground identities in what they see as 'hard' or 'objective' facts, such as those of demography, ecology, geography and political economy. These scholars are likely to be suspicious of contesting narratives of Europe and of nebulous formulae such as 'European values'. They try to specify limits on the extent to which entities such as Europe can be constructed or *invented*. But does Europe have objective attributes at all? Even if it does have some, might there be other 'hard' reference points in history which should render us critical of current efforts on many fronts to narrate a European identity? I shall argue that Europe is an important and fascinating macro-region of the landmass of Eurasia. It should not be conceived as a *continent*, the equivalent of Asia.¹ In this paper I place this critique of 'continentalism' in the framework of a multiscale theory of narrative identity constructions. I begin with the individual, and continue with ethnic groups and nation-states, the most significant 'imagined communities'² of recent generations in Europe. I shall argue that these 'lower' levels of identity are about the forging of community or *Gemeinschaft* through emotional investment. In terms of

¹ C. Hann, "Europe in Eurasia", in U. Kockel, M. Nic Craith, J. Frykman (eds.), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, Oxford 2012, pp. 88-102.

² B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

promoting democratic forms of society or *Gesellschaft*, I argue that recognition of Eurasian commonalities is more helpful than further reifications of Europe.

INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVE INSINUATION

I begin by turning back the clock a century, to an era when European mobilities and identities were very different from what they are today. Speaking for the first time in the Collegium Maius of the Jagiellonian University, I cannot help thinking of the extraordinary career of Bronisław Malinowski, generally acknowledged to be the founder of the modern British school in social anthropology. The 'hard' facts are reasonably well known. Malinowski's successive migrations led him ever further west. After obtaining his doctorate in Cracow he moved in 1908 to Leipzig, where he was influenced by Karl Bücher. After little more than a year in Germany, he moved on to London, becoming an avid Anglophile and enthusiastic supporter of the British Empire. The last years of his life were spent in exile in the Americas, but there is general agreement that he was intellectually most productive during the 1920s and early 1930s while working at the London School of Economics. What interests me here is the ingenious way in which he constructed his own biography during this period.

Malinowski's road to Damascus story is well known and best told in Michael Young's rich biography.³ Britain's best known anthropologist in the decades before the First World War was James Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough*. Malinowski's approach to the discipline, emphasizing field research and a functionalist sociological approach, could not have differed more from that of Frazer. Yet he was grateful for the patronage of Frazer and asked the great man to contribute a Preface to his first and most famous monograph.⁴ Frazer did his best to oblige his 'esteemed friend'. A few years later, in 1925 Malinowski held the first Frazer Lecture at the University of Liverpool, where Frazer had been appointed Professor of Social Anthropology in 1907 (the first Chair in the world to bear this name). He used the occasion to honour his predecessor, while at the same time spinning a romantic version of his own biography and staking his claim to be Frazer's successor as the leader of a new generation of social anthropologists. Appropriately enough, the subject of his lecture was 'Myth in primitive psychology': *If I had the power of invoking the past, I should like to lead you back some twenty years to an old Slavonic university town – I mean the town of Cracow, the ancient Capital of Poland and the seat of the oldest university in Eastern Europe. I could then show you a student leaving the medieval college buildings, obviously in some distress of mind, hugging, however, under his arm, as the only solace of his troubles, three green volumes... The Golden Bough ...no sooner had I begun to read this great work, than I became immersed in it and enslaved by it. I realized then that anthropology, as presented by Sir James Frazer, is*

³ M. Young, *Malinowski. Odyssey of an Anthropologist, 1884-1920*, New Haven 2004.

⁴ B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, London 1922.

*a great science, worthy of as much devotion as any of her elder and more exact sister studies, and I became bound to the service of Frazerian anthropology.*⁵

As Young notes after quoting these lines, (a)lthough this is a compelling conversion myth, it is unreliable history.⁶ In the terms of the present conference, Malinowski delivered a narrative, and we can judge it as successful because it was taken up in later narratives, including textbook histories of the discipline. But was it ‘hard’ or ‘true’? One reason for doubting its veracity is the fact that, in a letter to Frazer, Malinowski asserted that he had discovered *The Golden Bough* in a quite different manner, when his mother read it aloud to him.⁷ Other elements in Malinowski’s personal insinuation are similarly suspect, e.g. the emphasis he placed on his training in laboratory sciences, when in fact the humanities dominated. His Cracow doctorate was written not in physics but in philosophy. Its main subject was the arch-positivist Ernst Mach, and Malinowski later propagated a positivist scientific method in his famous London seminar. But he also drew on Nietzsche and Conrad to construct his persuasive narratives, many of which are still basic reading for students of anthropology. Given his fame, I am surprised that the name of Bronisław Malinowski does not yet figure on the heritage trail here at the Jagiellonian University, where his father was a university professor. Despite his extraordinary conversion experience in this very place, the tour guides seem not even to recognize his name.

Was Malinowski’s life a European one? He was undoubtedly proud of his Cracow roots: in the above quotation he overlooks Prague in claiming the UJ to be the oldest university of the region – but perhaps he did not consider Prague as a part of Eastern Europe? Malinowski was also proud of his Polish *szlachta* identity. Ernest Gellner goes so far as to call him a ‘cultural nationalist’.⁸ Malinowski was not a political nationalist but a loyal subject of the Emperor Franz Joseph. We owe the Trobriand monographs in part to the fact that he was an Austrian citizen; Melanesia was a better place to sit out the First World War than an Australian prison, or the bloodlands of eastern Galicia, where his Hungarian contemporary Karl Polanyi was traumatized. Malinowski transferred his civic loyalties from Austria to Britain and the British Empire, but seems never to have lost sentimental ties to Poland as his national *Gemeinschaft*. Even if he did not invoke Europe prominently in his last writings about civilization and freedom, his values can be appropriately characterized as those of a ‘European conservative liberal’.⁹ I shall return both to values and to the individual named Bronisław Malinowski below.

⁵ “Dedication to Sir James Frazer, ‘Myth in Primitive Psychology’”, in B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, ed. R. Redfield, New York 1954, cited in M. Young, *Malinowski...*, pp. 3-4.

⁶ M. Young, *Malinowski...*, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 612.

⁸ According to Gellner, the fact that the Polish nation had not been treated kindly by history was a key element for understanding the Malinowskian paradigm of synchronic functionalism in social anthropology. See E. Gellner, “‘Zeno of Cracow’ or ‘Revolution at Nemi’ or ‘The Polish Revenge: A Drama in Three Acts’”, in R. Ellen et al. (eds.), *Malinowski between Two Worlds. The Polish Roots of an Anthropological Tradition*, Cambridge 1988, p. 192.

⁹ J. Mucha, “Malinowski and the Problems of Contemporary Civilisation”, in R. Ellen et al. (eds.), *Malinowski...*, p. 162.

ETHNIC GROUPS AND NATIONS

Social anthropologists and sociologists study identities on multiple scales in every imaginable domain, but few would dispute that one very basic form of belonging in recent centuries has been the identity felt with an ethnic group or nation (I have no space to explore terminological nuances in this paper). Far from transcending this form of *Gemeinschaft*, globalization and accelerating mobility have arguably entrenched it as a 'global grammar' for talking about identity in the modern world, even though other factors conspire to destabilise established forms of belonging.¹⁰ The best known theoreticians of this modernity are Benedict Anderson¹¹ and Ernest Gellner.¹² While Anderson paid more attention to the symbols and narratives of the 'imagined community', Gellner emphasized its functional logic in meeting the needs of industrial society.

Following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, the new Polish republic set about implementing a version of Gellner's homogenized modernity. The task was by no means straightforward, for Polish national consciousness had developed unevenly in the three polities which divided Poland between them in the late 18th century. The writings of Adam Mickiewicz had inspired an intelligentsia, but in some sections of the peasantry, by far the largest segment of the population, national awakening had yet to take place. New narratives were needed. They were provided by elites, above all through the education system, in accordance with the Gellnerian model. After the quelling of revolution in western Ukraine, the new state included vast territories in which ethnic Poles constituted only a minority of the population, sometimes quite a small minority. In much of the east (mythologised in narratives of *Kresy*) the keyword was 'pacification'. The tensions of the inter-war decades prepared the ground for the atrocities of the 1940s. The slaughter continued almost to the end of the decade. With drastically altered borders, following massive deportations of Germans and Ukrainians, the People's Republic came closer to fulfilling the Gellnerian ideal of congruence between the polity and the nation than any previous Polish state. Despite its internationalist ideology, the legitimacy of socialist power holders (such as it was) derived primarily from their claim to represent the nation and the manipulation of national symbols.¹³

Gellner offers helpful models but real life is more complicated, as Malinowski's biography illustrated. Polish cultural nationalism did not interfere with the budding anthropologist's political allegiance to Vienna any more than it hindered his acquisition of British citizenship in the 1920s. Ambiguities also arose at the level of ethnic groups and nations where possible, for example, in the Lemko region of the Polish Carpathians, the Warsaw authorities implemented policies of divide and rule to weaken the

¹⁰ See T.H. Eriksen, E. Schober, "Introduction: The Art of Belonging in an Overheated World", in *idem* (eds.), *Identity Destabilised. Living in an Overheated World*, London 2016, pp. 1-19.

¹¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities...*

¹² E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983.

¹³ Z. Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity. Essays in Political Anthropology*, Albany 1993.

Ukrainian movement. Later the policies shifted to Polonisation, but not before the state's narratives had contributed significantly to the construction of a Lemko identity that thousands of individuals, today in the 21st century, sincerely believe to be distinct from Ukrainian ethnic identity.¹⁴ While recognized as an ethnic minority in Poland, these people are denied such constitutional recognition in Ukraine, where the current government pursues the Gellnerian model more intransigently than its Russia-oriented predecessors. Paul Robert Magocsi's narratives of Lemko-Rusyn distinctiveness provide a fine example of the way in which collective identities can be shaped by committed intellectuals.¹⁵

The end of socialism brought further processes of change. Undoubtedly some of the millions of young Poles who began, even before EU accession in 2004, to migrate westwards in search of jobs have acquired more cosmopolitan identities in cities such as London or Glasgow. Yet it is also the case that, in circumstances in which market forces undermine the cohesion of communities, many citizens have recourse to a reactionary nationalism, for which the fashionable term is 'populism'. Many individuals who struggled in the *Solidarity* movement against socialist repression have since lost their jobs and succumbed to the appeal of right-wing populists.¹⁶ National identity is not a constant but shows great plasticity. The rise of malignant forms of nationalism can be found in many parts of Europe, but the fact that is particularly strong in the Visegrád countries surely has to do with the fact that access to the EU (in 2004) has done little to close the gap in living standards with more powerful countries to the west. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that narratives of a common European identity are received sceptically.

NARRATIVES OF EUROPE AND THE CONTEMPORARY IMPASSE

After the Second World War, and more intensively towards the end of the 20th century, the nation-state was increasingly supplanted. Although the domains of economy and politics were prioritized for a long time, eventually the European Union committed itself to investing in a common European cultural identity.¹⁷ In addition to celebrating great Europeans of the recent past, such as Monnet and Schumann, this required narratives of a more remote history. While never ceasing to invoke the legacies of the ancient Mediterranean (this is what underpinned the fast-track admission of Greece in 1981), the most influential narratives emphasized the unique contributions of medieval Latin

¹⁴ P.R. Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains. A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns*, Budapest 2016, pp. 238-239.

¹⁵ C. Hann, "Intellectuals, Ethnic Groups and Nations: Two Late Twentieth Century Cases", in S. Perival (ed.), *Notions of Nationalism*, Budapest 1995, pp. 106-28.

¹⁶ D. Kalb, "Conversations with a Polish Populist: Tracing Hidden Histories of Globalization, Class, and Dispossession in Postsocialism (and beyond)", *American Ethnologist*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2009), pp. 207-223, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2009.01131.x>>.

¹⁷ C. Shore, *Building Europe. The Cultural Politics of European Integration*, London 2000.

Christendom to the formation of a pan-European identity.¹⁸ If one takes the standard geographical definition of recent centuries, according to which Europe extends to the Ural Mountains, narratives grounded in Latin Christianity, like narratives which prioritize scientific or industrial revolutions, seem terribly imbalanced. They can offer little emotional sustenance to the citizens of countries such as Poland and the Baltic states, not to mention eastern Christians and other 'Others' in the Balkans.

There is no doubt that certain highly mobile elite groups (sometimes termed Eurocrats) have developed new life styles and identifications on an unprecedented scale.¹⁹ Germans have led the way in promoting the higher cause, partly for good historical reasons but also because greater unification, notably in the Eurozone, has been a very good thing for the German economy.²⁰ Outside the elites the situation is less clear, even in Germany. It has been explored by many 'European ethnologists' in recent decades. They are interested in empirical manifestations as well as the discourses or narratives through which Europe is constructed.²¹ Alessandro Testa considers²² these constructions to be so successful that he concludes that 'Europe actually exists in social life'. As someone who has lived in different parts of Europe throughout his life, I have a very different impression. In spite of all the initiatives and the vast sums that have been invested in promoting a European cultural identity (history books, public holidays, street names and the Museum of European Cultures), what strikes me all over the macro-region is how very limited this remains in popular consciousness. Liberal Eurocrats who have grown accustomed to professing their European identity nowadays wince at the rhetoric of leaders such as Viktor Orbán, who present themselves to be the true defenders of European values. It is not difficult to understand why in many parts of Eastern Europe 'European' has entered popular discourse as an indication of a quality product (e.g. compared with inferior local or Chinese-made equivalents). But European is also increasingly deployed pejoratively, as a synonym for remote oppressive bureaucracy, no less wasteful and corrupt than local and national bureaucracies.

Although it is generally associated with the study of collectivities, sociology also has a well-established tradition of deep biographical research. Recently, funded by the European Union in its "Seventh Framework Programme", an international team of European sociologists has investigated through intensive interviewing the extent to which individual subjects in various countries and socio-economic categories have come to consider themselves European.²³ The 'Euroidentities' programme staked no claim to statistical representativeness. On the contrary, while avoiding Eurocrats, there was

¹⁸ J. Le Goff, *L'Europe est-elle née au Moyen Âge?*, Paris 2003.

¹⁹ A. Favell, *Eurostars and Eurocities. Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe*, Oxford 2008.

²⁰ W. Streeck, *Buying Time. The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, London 2017.

²¹ R. Jöhler (ed.), *Where is Europe? Wo ist Europa? Où est l'Europe? Dimensionen und Erfahrungen des neuen Europa*, Tübingen 2013.

²² A. Testa, "On Eurasia and Europe", *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2015).

²³ R. Miller (ed. with G. Day), *The Evolution of European Identities. Biographical Approaches*, New York 2012.

still a strong bias to those who were well educated and highly mobile across European boundaries (e.g. Erasmus students rather than poorly qualified members of the same cohort trapped in a region without employment prospects, for whom international migration was an entirely different experience). Even so, the sociologists came up with some worrying results for those who suppose naively that increased international interaction is bound to promote strong common identities above the national level. As a result of successive economic crises, some German interviewees were beginning to despair of Greeks, who were perceived as refusing to take advantage of all the benevolence extended towards them, in their failure to adopt the German work ethic. For their part, the Greek interlocutors were giving up all hopes of catching up with the more advanced (or at any rate more economically efficient) north.

In Poland I have a sense (admittedly based only on short visits and conversations rather than systematic research) that, in the years following EU accession in 2004, at least some provincial citizens welcomed the more transparent procedures of Brussels, in comparison with the networks through which they had to work in Warsaw or the *województwo* capital. In recent years, however, disillusionment has set in – encouraged by politicians such as the Kaczyński brothers and the mass media. Nationalist sentiment is being stoked before our eyes by the current refugee crisis. The German Chancellor seized the moral high ground by opening Germany's borders to migrants. But Angela Merkel then insisted with breath-taking arrogance that countries such as Poland and Hungary should accept a share of responsibility for shouldering the consequences of her generosity. Given the continued disarray of European governance and ever-widening social inequalities, it is hardly surprising that Polish voters are reaffirming their national identity and looking at both Brussels and Berlin with intensifying suspicion. At any rate, this is how I interpret the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2015.

The allure of European narratives has been fading everywhere. It was never particularly strong on the island where I was born, which in recent years has witnessed a great upsurge in Scottish nationalism, and where narratives of true Englishness are now invoked by nationalists to support calls for a definitive rupture with Brussels. Prime Minister David Cameron caved in to these voices within his party by promising a referendum on EU membership if re-elected to power in the British General Election of May 2015. One of his first engagements after winning this election was to attend an EU summit meeting in the ancient German Baltic city of Riga, nowadays the capital of independent Latvia. The main subject on the agenda of this summit was supposed to be the EU's policy towards its eastern neighbours. Six former republics of the Soviet Union figure in the 'Eastern Partnership' programme: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Although their leaders were invited to renew their networks in Latvia, they went away empty-handed (as did David Cameron). In an era of enduring political and economic crisis, the EU is in no position to offer these countries more concessions, such as opening up visa-free mobility within the Schengen zone (only Moldavians enjoy this privilege at present). As a result, most of them remain more dependent on the labour markets of the Russian Federation than on the West.

Russia was, of course, as so often at so-called European summits, the elephant in the conference room. In Latvia, Russians replaced Germans long ago as the largest minority. There is less anti-Russian sentiment here than in neighbouring Estonia and Lithuania, but fear of 'the bear next door' has been whipped up throughout the region to justify NATO manoeuvres. Ethnic Russians experience discrimination and vulnerability in all three states. There was a time not so long ago when Russia was an integral element of post-socialist strategic policymaking, to be included in 'partnership' arrangements. But the Kremlin was gradually excluded from the conversations long before violence erupted in Ukraine in 2014. Socio-political and economic conditions inside Russia itself, as well as those targeted in the Eastern Partnership, continue to deteriorate as a result of the blinkers of Western policymakers, who seem unable to think outside Cold War antinomies. The Riga summit, to those who registered it at all, showed that this impasse remains.

From the point of view of an NGO activist in, say, Tbilisi, or for that matter in Moscow, it is all so unfair. Like liberal Eurocrats in Brussels, these activists *believe* in Europe and a Western model of 'civil society'. One might almost say that this is their Church.²⁴ But the current policies of the EU make such ideals ever more illusory. They function instead to consolidate the worst elements of the Soviet legacies. In their domestic political struggles, the pro-Western forces appear to be losing ground to those who assert the necessity of respecting the old dependencies. It must be especially galling for liberals outside the EU to observe the rise of nationalist-conservative forces inside the fortress. Hungary's Viktor Orbán was once a radical proponent of the civil society model himself. Nowadays he is one of the few Western leaders on good terms with Vladimir Putin. As a result, he is ostracised by other EU leaders. But those who pour scorn on Orbán or Poland's new leaders should first make an effort to grasp the conditions which prevail throughout postsocialist Eastern Europe, which has been reduced to the status of a new periphery for global capital.²⁵

Due to the real and symbolic significance of maintaining the Eurozone, the market turbulence which erupted in 2008 appears to have rendered Europe's north-south cleavage suddenly more salient than the old east-west divide. But the latter has not gone away. The deeper problems are the same in both east and south. Why should citizens of Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia be attracted by a system which, even for more favourably located states such as Hungary and Poland, has brought so much economic disruption and compelled millions of citizens to seek work in the EU's richer states? Even if wages in the Russian Federation are much lower and the jobs hardly more secure, it makes much more sense for the life-worlds of those who live in the countries targeted by the Eastern Partnership to seek work in a country where they can at least communicate in the dominant language. Instead of seeking more comprehensive solutions to people's

²⁴ C. Hann, "In the Church of Civil Society", in M. Glasius, D. Lewis, H. Seckinelgin (eds.), *Exploring Civil Society. Political and Cultural Contexts*, London 2004, pp. 44-50.

²⁵ D. Bohle, "East Central Europe in the European Union", in A. Cafruny et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical International Political Economy*, London 2016, pp. 369-89.

livelihood challenges through negotiations with the rising powers of East and South Asia, in 2015 Western European politicians can agree on just two priorities: to deepen free trade with North America and to increase defence budgets. It seems that their only response to the new economic precariousities of neoliberal capitalism is to revive the old geopolitical precariousities.

The decades since 1990 have brought massive changes to the macro-region of Europe, but narratives of *longue durée* cultural unity have not become any more convincing. When Mikhail Gorbachev offered the emancipatory narrative of a 'common European home', it was still possible to dream of ultimate integration. But the steady enlargement of NATO alongside the expansion of the EU has rendered this impossible. Structural flaws in the EU and in western capitalism more generally have made it necessary to find a new 'Other' to demonize. Europe remains the ultimate good, and its evil other is once again located in Moscow, where the Russian President is playing to perfection the role prescribed for him.

The long-running debate about Ukraine and Europe is, of course, one that touches Poland very directly. The narrative of the post-Yanukovych power holders is that of joining Europe, a stance supported by Warsaw. The new elites in Kiev obtain academic legitimation from scholars who theorise Ukraine as a postcolonial state, where Russia is the ex-imperial power crudely attempting to hold on to its last bastions in Donbass.²⁶ But this is to simplify Ukrainian history grossly. Poland too was an imperial power here for centuries, and old narratives of the *Kresy* have by no means lost their affective power. Is Moscow truly an imperium or is it better seen as continuing to play the role of a backward Other, against which Western European elites can continue to assert their total moral superiority? The tragic violence which began in 2014 will not be resolved by forcing Ukraine into the Gellnerian corset of a homogenized nation-state, as a precondition for 'joining Europe' (meaning the EU). Peace will be restored when power holders turn away from what Richard Sakwa terms 'monad nationalism'²⁷ in favour of new narratives of pluralism, both within the Ukraine and throughout the European macro-region.

It is difficult to see how any narrative strategy could render Europe the focus of subjective sentiments of belonging comparable to the 'imagined community' of the nation. All efforts to construct a subjective *Gemeinschaft* on this scale have foundered (except perhaps for the Eurostar elites). In terms of constructing rational and democratic forms of *Gesellschaft*, the present performance of the EU is equally unsatisfactory, since it continues to exclude hundreds of millions of Europeans from membership and to serve the selfish interests of a minority of member countries in the north-west of the region.²⁸

²⁶ T. Snyder, "Integration and Disintegration: Europe, Ukraine, and the World", *Slavic Review*, vol. 74, no. 4 (2015), pp. 695-707, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.4.695>>.

²⁷ R. Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine. Crisis in the Borderlands*, London 2014.

²⁸ I would not have invoked the classic distinction of Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber in revising this paper without the stimulus of Thomas Faist, who I met at the Cracow conference. See T. Faist, C. Ulbricht, "Von Integration zu Teilhabe? Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis von Vergemeinschaftung und Vergesellschaftung", *Sociologia Internationalis*, vol. 52, no. 1 (2014), pp. 119-147, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3790/sint.52.1.119>>.

EURASIA

Having dealt briefly with narratives at levels which will be more or less familiar to most readers, in this section I outline at greater length a narrative that is likely to be unfamiliar.²⁹ Eurasia is a narrative *concept*, with a history which can be tracked. For me, it is also a *thing*. Eurasia refers to matter which has existed in the world for a very long time, irrespective of the name we give it. My narrative of Eurasia is derived from broad swathes of historical and social-science research into concrete processes of change in human society over the last three millennia. Eurasia is composed primarily of the landmass which is conventionally divided into the two continents of Asia and Europe. These names were bestowed by the Ancient Greeks. The conceit in regarding them as equivalent continents, western and eastern, has long been recognized. To insist on Eurasia is thus to correct an ancient bias. The compound draws attention to the constructed character of the terms Europe and Asia. It prompts reflection on the arbitrariness of many other classifications (such as the West's imposition of 'Orient' on a Chinese society which has traditionally considered itself to be the Middle Kingdom), on the very concept of a continent, and on the ideological implications of such 'metageography'.³⁰

Of course Eurasia, too, is necessarily a narrative construction. This amalgam is a product of relatively recent scholarship. It is not an emic term, not a collective identity or a *Gemeinschaft* in which particular populations of humans will ever feel emotionally at home. I have to recognize that, in the English-speaking world as in other languages, Eurasia is narrated differently. It is increasingly invoked as the collective label for a limited number of post-Soviet states (there is no consensus as to the exact number), with the possible addition of Mongolia. Such narrow definitions are clouded by contemporary political ideologies and I shall not devote more space to them here. Suffice it to state that I consider the concept of Eurasia too useful and important to be abandoned to Russian nationalists.

Having conceded that the word Eurasia has contingent origins and that it has not been used in a consistent way by scholars, I nonetheless assert that it remains the best term available to denote the largest landmass of the planet (including large islands such as Great Britain and Japan). However, my concept of Eurasia is not determined by geographical, geological or other boundaries set by nature. To this geographical landmass I add the southern shores of the Mediterranean, in other words the northern zones of the continent known as Africa. In the epoch during which the key features of this historical Eurasia emerged, from roughly 1000 BC, civilizational interconnectedness intensified across the Indian Ocean as well as overland via what has recently been termed the Silk Road. Most sub-Saharan populations, together with many in the landmass

²⁹ C. Hann, "A Concept of Eurasia", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 57, no. 1 (2016), pp. 1-27, at <<https://doi.org/10.1086/684625>>.

³⁰ M.W. Lewis, K. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents. A Critique of Metageography*, Berkeley 1997.

itself, especially in its vast northern regions, were not integrated into this connectivity for a very long time. Eurasia included not just the agrarian empires but also the pastoral nomads of the 'Near East' and 'Inner Asia.' In some historical eras, the nomads (notably the Mongols) were instrumental in bringing very large territories under one polity. However, my use of Eurasia is not dependent on the fluctuating extent to which territories of Europe were politically united with territories of Asia (very considerable under Genghis Khan and again later under the Russian Empire and under Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism). Eurasia is thus the name for a 'supra-continental' unity forged over the last three millennia. This Eurasia expanded from its core civilizations to include more and more non-agrarian penumbra regions, where quite different forms of civilization developed. Recognition of Eurasia is no impediment to supplementary spatial, temporal and socio-cultural categorizations within the larger entity, on a smaller scale. I see Europe as one very important macro-region.

Eurasian unity must not be exaggerated. Its beginnings are particularly uncertain. New forms of hierarchy emerged in human society during the Neolithic as a result of innovations in the means of production and communication. The mobility of goods, people and ideas intensified in a dialectical relation with controls over these processes, including ideological as well as coercive forms of power. To impose any neat periodization on these gradual processes can seem arbitrary, even spurious. I specify the first millennium BCE in order to include the entire Axial Age, with its radical changes in 'religious' consciousness in multiple locations of Eurasia, but I do not postulate religious or 'cognitive' changes as the drivers. Important developments in political economy can be traced back to earlier millennia. By the beginning of the Common Era we can recognize a tenuous east-west connectivity stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But it took a further two millennia to incorporate the more northerly regions of the Eurasian landmass; this was accomplished in Siberia only when the institutions of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism were imposed in the twentieth century. By this time, global systems had already integrated the entire planet to an unprecedented degree. This globalization has accelerated since the demise of these socialist regimes.

It follows from these observations that a concept with these spatiotemporal demarcation lines is by no means self-evident, either in nature or in history. The construction needs justification through a narrative representation of the *longue durée* history of this Eurasia. A socio-cultural anthropologist is obliged to rely on secondary sources in other disciplines. I follow historian William H. McNeill, who even in his early work devoted to explaining the 'rise of the west' dealt with the super-continent as a whole.³¹ Marshall Hodgson (as one would expect from a scholar whose main preoccupation was Islam, the dominant civilization of the southern shores of the Mediterranean) preferred to designate the same space 'Afro-Eurasia.'³² The important point is that Hodgson, like McNeill, disavows any separation between Europe and Asia as continents.

³¹ W.H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community*, Chicago 1963.

³² M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Chicago 1974.

Johann Arnason³³ terms this unity the ‘Eurasian macro-region’. This appears to constitute a mainstream position in contemporary global history.

For the gestation of this super-continent we need to look first of all to archaeology. One of the first to insist on the interconnectedness of the Eurasian landmass was the Australian Gordon Childe, who emphasized not the emergence of agriculture in the Neolithic, a world-historical process with parallels in Africa and the Americas, but rather the emergence and long-term consolidation of highly stratified societies on the basis of literacy and the new urban economies which flourished in the Bronze Age.³⁴ He was strongly influenced by the materialist paradigms of progress of Engels and Marx. Childe’s Eurasianist credentials can be questioned in the sense that, while pointing to connections across the landmass, he does so with a strong bias to the ‘Near East’ and arguably a premise of European exceptionalism that has affinities with what later came to be termed Orientalism. He was convinced that essential differences between East and West could be traced back over millennia.³⁵ Nonetheless, his work has inspired later prehistorians to document the exchanges of goods and ideas between East and West without such a teleology, and even to theorize these movements in terms of ‘world systems’ and globalization.³⁶

In socio-cultural anthropology, Jack Goody has consistently acknowledged his debt to Childe in the course of developing his own concept of the unity of Eurasia. Goody’s initial insights derived from his ethnographic research in West Africa. He contrasted plough agriculture in Eurasia with reliance on the digging stick in sub-Saharan Africa and linked the differences in technology and productive efficiency to differences in kinship, household organization, the holding of property, modes of inheritance and technologies of communication.³⁷ The agrarian societies of Eurasia spawned vast empires, cities and social hierarchies marked by enormous differentiation in consumption, which contrasted sharply with almost everything Goody knew from West Africa.³⁸ Having expounded this inter-continental contrast, Goody focused in later work more on East-West comparisons within the super-continent. His principal aim was to critique Eurocentrism via a concept of Eurasia that is based on ‘alternating leadership’

³³ J.P. Arnason, “State Formation and Empire Building, 500-1500”, in B.Z. Kedar, M.E. Wiesner-Hanks (eds.), *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 5: *Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500 CE-1500 CE*, Cambridge 2015, pp. 483-512.

³⁴ V.G. Childe, *What Happened in History*, Harmondsworth 1942.

³⁵ D. Wengrow, “The Intellectual Adventure of Henri Frankfort: A Missing Chapter in the History of Archaeological Thought”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 103, no. 4 (1999), pp. 597-613, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/507074>>.

³⁶ T.C. Wilkinson, S. Sherratt, J. Bennet (eds.), *Interweaving Worlds. Systemic Interactions in Eurasia, 7th to 1st Millennia BC*, Oxford 2011.

³⁷ J. Goody, *Production and Reproduction. A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain*, Cambridge 1976; and idem, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge 1977.

³⁸ Idem, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class. A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge 1982; and idem, “Gordon Childe, the Urban Revolution, and the Haute Cuisine: An Anthro-archaeological View of Modern History”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 48, no. 3 (2006), pp. 503-519, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0010417506000211>>.

between East and West, mediated by flows of goods and ideas along the established overland and maritime routes. This model of alternation did not break down until the nineteenth century.³⁹

Goody's distinction between Eurasian social organization and African social organization south of the Sahara forms the basis of my own concept, but I supplement his account by drawing attention to unity and diversity in the civilizational dimension, which he neglects. One example, central to the dynamics of Eurasia, is the long-term interaction between the sedentary agriculturalists who form his main focus and neighbouring populations of pastoral nomads and hunter gathers. Here, too, we can speak of vast zones of connectivity dating back many millennia, shaped by environmental change as well as socio-cultural factors. However, these pastoralists did not develop radically new forms of society, polity and cosmology comparable to those of sedentary peoples, and they are thus overlooked by Goody. Together with historians and historical sociologists, anthropologists such as Anatoly Khazanov⁴⁰ and Thomas Barfield⁴¹ have demonstrated the symbiotic nature of the nomadic frontier, broadly confirming an analysis offered centuries earlier by Ibn Khaldun for Islam in North Africa.⁴² To focus on exchanges across the East-West agrarian belt and the maritime routes is inadequate. From the middle of the first millennium CE onwards, an additional key contrast is that between the 'inner' and 'outer' components of Eurasia.⁴³

Another weakness in Goody's approach is his treatment of what Johann Arnason terms the religious-political nexus. The era in which Eurasian agrarian societies consolidate their distinctive historical paths is that characterized by philosopher-historian Karl Jaspers⁴⁴ as the Axial Age, in which new means of communication enabled not only new understandings of what it means to be human but also novel ways to legitimate political power. These ideas have generated productive debates in historical sociology, culminating in theories of 'multiple modernities' in which the principal civilizational units are defined by the 'world religions' that can be traced back to the Axial Age.⁴⁵ Some scholars are now beginning to question classical formulations of this concept, e. g. by expanding it to include the much later religions of Christianity and Islam.⁴⁶ Goody ignores these debates. More generally, he does not address the ways in which the long-term unity of Eurasia is inflected by civilizational pluralism, whether

³⁹ Idem, *The East in the West*, Cambridge 1996; idem, *The Theft of History*, Cambridge 2006; and idem, *The Eurasian Miracle*, Cambridge 2010.

⁴⁰ A. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, Cambridge 1984.

⁴¹ T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier. Nomadic Empires and China*, Oxford 1989.

⁴² E. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge 1981.

⁴³ J.P. Arnason, "State Formation..."

⁴⁴ K. Jaspers, "The Axial Age of Human History: A Base for the Unity of Mankind", *Commentary*, vol. 6, no. 5 (1948), pp. 430-435.

⁴⁵ See S. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Multiple Modernities*, New Brunswick 2002; and J.P. Arnason, S. Eisenstadt, B. Wittrock (eds.), *Axial Civilizations and World History*, Leiden 2005.

⁴⁶ R.N. Bellah, H. Joas (eds.), *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, Cambridge 2012.

this is defined narrowly with regard to religion or more broadly, inside and outside the agrarian belt. He prefers to focus on the transmission of ideas and technologies across Eurasia via what he calls 'merchant cultures'.⁴⁷ He uses this term in a very broad sense, consistent with archaeologists who emphasize the significance of exchange and commoditization from ancient times.⁴⁸ Goody's argument is consistent with expanding bodies of scholarship that push the origins of capitalist modernity much further back in time and critique 'European miracle' narratives that place undue emphasis on developments in western Eurasia in the last half millennium.

Yet long-distance traders were not the only agents in these unprecedented social formations. In Europe before it was named as such, Aristotle emphasized the values of the self-sufficient *oikos*, the well-ordered estate. In China before its classification as one region of 'Asia', Confucius was similarly disparaging of the traders. They existed, they were important in the allocation of goods, but their prestige was relatively low and their operations were constrained by the controls of state officials. In the jargon of much later schools of anthropology and economic sociology, the economy was everywhere 'embedded' in a socio-political whole. Goody pays too little attention to this embeddedness, and to its sacred legitimation, which varied from one civilization to the next. The common characteristics were new notions of community and responsibility, elaborated through ideas of solidarity and even love of one's neighbour. I do not propose these new concepts of morality and 'transcendence' as the main drivers of human social evolution in this period, but nor do I dismiss them as mere superstructure or clutter. The key fact is that a succession of Eurasian civilizations consolidated their values through combinations of redistribution and exchange, or of state and market (to employ a binary that became dominant much later). They legitimated these structures through ideals of socio-political inclusion, including the concept of democracy itself, which clearly differed from the equivalent principles in pre-Axial societies (primarily kinship). The fact that slaves were not members of the polis or *Gesellschaft*, and that these societies were more highly stratified than all previous human societies, does not invalidate the significance of this ideological background for the organization of the economy.

When we enter the last five hundred years, recognition of the unity of Eurasia is occluded in Western scholarship by the extraordinary history of European expansion (primarily via the maritime empires of North-West Europe but also by the Russian overland conquest of most of Central Asia and Siberia). This is the time frame of Eric Wolf's magnum opus.⁴⁹ Alongside Goody, Wolf is untypical among twentieth-century anthropologists in the attention he pays to long-term historical factors. In his conceptualization, Europe is not essentially different from 'tributary' states at the other end of the landmass. And yet the very title of this work, combined with its limitation to

⁴⁷ J. Goody, *Islam in Europe*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 150-154.

⁴⁸ A. Sherratt, S. Sherratt, "From Luxuries to Commodities: The Nature of Mediterranean Bronze Age Trading Systems", in N.H. Gale (ed.), *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean*, Göteborg 1991, pp. 351-386.

⁴⁹ E.R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley 1982.

the recent centuries of North Atlantic domination, serves to reinforce the dominant paradigm of European or Western exceptionalism. Much the same can be said of the many anthropological studies influenced by the world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein,⁵⁰ which is marked by the same bias towards the Atlantic transformations of the last half millennium.

Industrial society and its principal container, the nation-state, were born little more than two centuries ago. The extent to which these forms of society were inaugurated by the earlier histories of Atlantic imperial expansion is still disputed. What matters for my concept of Eurasia is that, by the end of the eighteenth century, three millennia of hierarchical agrarian society were being called radically into question: economically by the rise of manufacturing and radical shifts in the relations between town and country, and politically by the extension of parliamentary democracy and proclamations of universal human rights, epitomized in the French revolution. The outstanding theoretician of this transition is Karl Polanyi, whose vision extends back to the Axial Age and whose notion of a 'great transformation' is more subtle than is commonly recognized.⁵¹ In this opus magnum Polanyi coupled a materialist account of the politics and economics of the long nineteenth century with close attention to the economic ideology of laissez-faire which became dominant in this era. When the 'self-regulating market' became the dominant 'form of integration' of the human economy (understood in a substantivist sense as the meeting of needs), this market principle threatened social peace and led to various forms of reaction in society, some benign (such as the formation of trades unions) and some malignant (such as jingoism and warfare). Sometimes Polanyi and his substantivist followers in economic anthropology referred to this dominance of the market as a 'disembedding' of the economy from society. Their critics on this point see 'market society' as merely a new and distinctive form of embedding, since it too depended on specific political and social conditions (in particular on an exceptionally strong state necessary to create these conditions).⁵² Only in the 'utopian' terms of liberal ideology can this market society be viewed as free, on the basis of an illusory *homo economicus* detached from his social context. The challenge, according to Polanyi, writing during and after the Second World War, was how to devise new forms of re-embedding the economy according to the original Aristotelian prototype, which would enable complex 'machine societies' to avoid the horrors of mass unemployment, Fascism and warfare.

In the second half of the twentieth century this challenge was effectively met in large parts of the world, including virtually the whole of Eurasia. It was met in two distinct ways, both of which reflected the impact of socialist-communist ideas stemming from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The workers' movements often railed against religion and the established churches, casting them as integral components of class-based

⁵⁰ I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, vol. 1, New York 1974.

⁵¹ K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston 1944.

⁵² See F. Block, M.R. Somers, *The Power of Market Fundamentalism. Karl Polanyi's Critique*, Cambridge 2014.

oppression. In theory, the triumph of communism was to be accompanied by the demise of all such superstition and the triumph of scientific atheism. In practice, implementation was inconsistent, and only Albania ever dared formally to abolish religion. Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, it has become easier to recognize the long-run continuities between Marxism and the pan-Eurasian heritage of Aristotle and Confucius. The Marxist-Leninist-Maoist states which explicitly embraced the doctrines of the nineteenth century founders, most of them economically 'backward' in comparison with the West, institutionalized a new version of the religious-political nexus. Society was subjected to rigid controls through one-party rule ('the dictatorship of the proletariat') and central planning. However, although older forms of stratification weakened or disappeared, new inequalities appeared. Private accumulation was severely constrained, but the spirit of *homo economicus* did not necessarily wither in these conditions, since individuals found themselves obliged to adopt selfish maximizing strategies in response to economic shortages.⁵³ Nonetheless, for all its contradictions, this was the path endorsed by Karl Polanyi himself. In his mature view, this form of socialism represented the only hope in the long run for rescuing humanity from the catastrophes of capitalist market society.

However, in the same era, largely coinciding with the Cold War, another 'great transformation' was accomplished in the opposing camp, i.e. the economically advanced countries of the West. These did not embrace Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism, but many of them elected Labour or Social-Democratic political parties to power. This 'electoral socialism'⁵⁴ played out very differently from the religious-political nexus of previous millennia, but it was able to harness older notions of society to institutionalize unprecedented welfare states based on universalist principles of inclusive citizenship. The result was by no means identical to that of the 'other' bloc, since the mixed or Keynesian or 'social market' economies of the West allowed much more scope for private accumulation. Nonetheless the market was no longer so dominant. In the new institutions of 'embedded liberalism'⁵⁵ this form of integration was moderated by a strong principle of redistribution, grounded in ideals of solidarity and social harmony. It was also characterized by high standards of protection for what Karl Polanyi termed the 'fictitious commodities' of labour and the environment ('land').⁵⁶

From such a revisionist Polyanian perspective, the Cold War in Eurasia, commonly represented as a contest between totalitarian central planning on the one hand and liberal-individualist free markets on the other, is thus better seen as a struggle between two variants of socialism, the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist and the 'electoral'. The differences between them were significant, but there was great empirical variation inside

⁵³ See K. Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*, Princeton 1996.

⁵⁴ J. Goody, "Sorcery and Socialism", in H. Grandits, P. Heady (eds.), *Distinct Inheritances. Property, Family and Community in Changing Europe*, Münster 2003, pp. 391-408.

⁵⁵ J. Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order", *International Organization*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1982), at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300018993>>.

⁵⁶ K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation...*

both camps, and many elements of convergence. In the 1960s, reviving the ideals of the New Deal which Polanyi had admired before the Second World War, Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society program extended citizenship entitlements in the United States. Hungary launched its New Economic Mechanism at almost the same time, decentralizing responsibilities and introducing many more elements of the market to an economy which remained fundamentally socialist in terms of ownership. When I began fieldwork in Hungary in the 1970s, some elements of this 'reform socialist' economy seemed strange to me; but many others were thoroughly familiar from my background in Britain, such as the provision of free health care and work-related pensions. In certain fields, including student grants, the British variant was more generously redistributive than the Hungarian. But there is nothing peculiarly European about the values which underpinned these forms of socialism; they were implemented, however imperfectly, in different ways in many other macro-regions of the landmass, notably in China.

During the Cold War these two variants of Polanyi's great transformation competed furiously for followers all over the planet. The Marxist-Leninist-Maoist variant was propagated to many countries of Old-World Eurasia, including India and Egypt. On the basis of their vast hydrocarbon resources, many other regions of the Islamic world were able to implement their own versions of a socialist agenda, the most quixotic being that of Colonel Gaddafi's Libya.⁵⁷ Soviet socialism was implemented more conventionally in Cuba, though elsewhere in the Americas the United States was eventually able to ensure that Western models predicated on the capitalist mixed economy would prevail. In short, following the disruption of the first century and a half of the industrial era, with all the catastrophic consequences documented by Polanyi, the control and embedding of markets alongside other forms of integration was re-institutionalized after 1945 and extended in two basic recipes all over the planet. I see this as the generalization of the most important outcome of the Eurasian *longue durée*. This era ended in the 1980s. Since then we have been living in a new era of market domination, together with predictable forms of reaction, some benign and some malignant. At this moment, the need to rediscover Polanyi's notion of the human economy,⁵⁸ and through him the original Eurasian perspective of Aristotle, becomes urgent once again.

CONCLUSION

Narrative constructions of identity can be investigated at multiple levels or scales. I have illustrated just a few in this paper, taking the life of Bronisław Malinowski as my initial point of reference. I discussed elements of his narrative self-presentation and his

⁵⁷ J. Davis, *Libyan Politics. Tribe and Revolution*, London 1987.

⁵⁸ K. Polanyi, "Aristotle Discovers the Economy", in idem, C. Arensberg, H. Pearson (eds.), *Trade and Market in Early Empires. Economies in History and Theory*, New York 1957, pp. 64-94. See also K. Hart, J.-L. Laville, A.D. Catani (eds.), *The Human Economy. A Citizen's Guide*, Cambridge 2010.

identifications with Polishness, with two major imperial powers, and with European civilization. If we could put Malinowski on the couch, we might find that other identifications were equally or even more significant in his life: his friendship with Staś Witkiewicz, with others in the *Młoda Polska* movement, his nostalgia for the Jan Sobieski Gymnasium or the Jagiellonian University, or the resort of Zakopane, or even the province of Galicia. But the evidence from the last years of his life is that, apart from his success in creating a mythical charter for himself as the founder of a school in social anthropology, what mattered most to him subjectively outside the complications of his personal life was the *Gemeinschaft* called Poland.

Whatever the narrative focus may be, scholars need to remain alert and not be too easily seduced by constructivist fashions. Malinowski's personal narratives served his instrumental purposes, just like the origin myths of the Trobriand clans that he analysed. We who experience the disarray of politics, economies and societies in Europe today need correctives to the widely disseminated narratives of nation and continent. We need a critical perspective on official narratives of European unity, which fail to take account of new polarities developing within the macro-region, north-south as well as east-west. European *Gemeinschaften* are currently being polarized at all points of the compass, old EU members, new EU members and non-EU members are all affected. Europe itself can never become a *Gemeinschaft* and the rhetoric of distinctive 'European values' is hollow, especially when deployed to ostracise other Europeans.

My proposal in this chaotic situation is to recognize the commonalities of Eurasia as the next key step in moving towards a new world society (*Weltgesellschaft*) and new global institutions of governance that would be genuinely inclusive of all human beings. We should teach our students about the rise of complex societies across the entire Eurasian landmass over millennia, rather than privilege the last four or five centuries and a uniquely European notion of modernity. The macro-region of Western Eurasia (i.e. Europe) set the pace economically and politically from the sixteenth century but nothing is gained by reifying this macro-region and trying to promote a new sense of collective belonging on this scale. The spurt that made Europe distinctive had nothing to do with Charlemagne, nor with later heroes of the Italian Renaissance or the French Enlightenment. Industrialization and finance capitalism were the crucial innovations, but they were highly specific to the North-West of the macro-region, not a pan-European phenomenon (and the economic development of Europe remains extremely uneven to this day). The current rise of China is a vivid reminder that the 'Great Divergence'⁵⁹ between east and west is looking increasingly ephemeral. The most compelling narrative is that of Jack Goody, for whom European contributions in recent centuries are nested within the longer time frame of 'alternating leadership' between East and West.⁶⁰ If Malinowski were able to read the books of scholars such as Pomeranz,

⁵⁹ K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton 2000.

⁶⁰ J. Goody, *The Eurasian Miracle...*; cf. A.G. Frank, *ReOrient. Global Economy in the Asian Age*, Berkeley 1998.

Gunder Frank and Goody, he would surely add Eurasian to the scale of his personal identifications – not as emotional *Gemeinschaft* but as the basis for working out more humane forms of *Gesellschaft*.

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