# THE NEW OLD WORLD*

ON THE BACK COVER of this stunning brick of a book, a brace of ringing endorsements from all the major English language press announce a publication of quite stupendous scope: ''European pieties go under the knife'', cheers one. Although this is not Perry Anderson's intention – he is not so much a Eurosceptic as a despairing radical Euro-intellectual from an older cosmopolitan tradition – there is not much hope left after reading his assessment of the ideals promoted in the ''life and works of the European saints'': those liberal founding fathers of the European Union who tried to secure the post-war continent's peace, prosperity and common values.

Anderson is an anachronism in today's academe. None of these essays could be published in a ''top'' academic journal today. He is ''old school'' in the good sense of the term: from an age when broad scholarship and fine writing still mattered. Part One is a characteristically scornful trawl through EU studies. As Anderson says, it is a generally dull subfield mostly defined by the role EU scholars play as interpreters and underwriters of the European project. In some senses, the critique is too easy, as there has never been much of theoretical interest in a literature that derives all its cues from more powerful arenas of political science. Anderson's lode star is the late Alan Milward, the cantankerous English historian, equally theory-sceptic, who stood, intellectual head and shoulders, over the EU studies field for decades. Anderson frankly admits he is not truly Milwardian: an honest acknowledgement perhaps of a certain thinness in his wholly secondary historical sourcing – visible in the opening chapter ''Origins'' – so unlike the archives-based obsessive thoroughness of the Milward school.

The chapter on ''Theories'' is better: a bracing book review of the best of the most visible recent contributions to a grand theory of European integration. Anderson constructs his reading of these works as a quite brilliant survey of the varieties of contemporary liberal thought. The central contrast is between works by Giandomenico Majone (regulative market), John Gillingham (pure market), Barry Eichengreen (social market) and Andrew Moravscik (pluralist market). Each work offers a different view of the balance of state and market imagined in the European construction. Yet only Gillingham's extreme position can really be identified as ''neo-liberal''. From the other side,

* About Perry ANDERSON, *The New Old World* (London, Verso 2009).



Adrian FAVELL, Centre d'études européennes (CEE), Sciences Po, Paris [adrian.favell@sciences-po.fr].
*Arch.europ.sociol.*, LIII, 3 (2012), pp. 363–367—0003-9756/12/0000-900$07.50per art + $0.10 per page

Anderson effectively endorses this reading by arguing that the EU is basically a crude neo-liberal project in the service of transnational capital, closer to Hayek than Monnet.

In Part Two of the book, Anderson moves into more comfortable home territory: the old Europa of grand national traditions, France, Germany and Italy. Anderson, like nearly all his colleagues in the American historical professional, is happier with a Europe clearly divided up into stable great powers, languages and cultures, to be compared not synthesised. This is methodological nationalism, of course; in Anderson, intellectuals are even largely determined by their national origins – not far from a Churchillian view of the ''genius of nations''. That, perhaps, is a little bit too old school as a view of Europe. Still, these long and winding texts at the heart of the book are a wonderful read. For instance, France parts one and two, the narrative of how the legacy of the 1960s Marxist and (post-)structuralist radicals was overcome by a generation of centrist liberals, led by François Furet, who effected a heist of the revolutionary tradition in service of the normalisation of French politics, during the consensual politics of the Mitterrand era. If anything, the chapters on France are even surpassed in the account of the intermeshed political and intellectual currents of the post-war Federal Republic.

What of Anderson's puzzling silence about contemporary Britain? Can it be really reduced to his bitter expat gut reaction that post-Thatcher Britain has been ''of little moment''? On reflection, this is surely wrong. While Paris declined, Berlin struggled, and Rome dropped off the map, London rose during the 1990s and 2000s, to become unambiguously the true capital of Europe: a rise to centrality and power crowned by the fevered preparation for a Union Jack strewn Olympics, even as its multi-ethnic underclass ''chavs'' (the contemporary phrase of choice for Orwell's ''proles'') were rioting in the streets. This was the era of that odd couple, Blair and Brown, whose teeth-gritted pact in an Islington restaurant upon the death of John Smith, before the 1997 elections, dictated the course of British history for the next 13 years.

The dour Brown – an old school liberal in the Scottish enlightenment tradition – positioned Britain offshore: creaming off the economic benefits of EU membership while insulating it from the burdens of joining a common currency.

Blair, the ever-smiling public face of New Labour, meanwhile, piloted through cajolement and smarm, a kind of public sector management revolution, in which benchmarking, performance related incentives, market efficiency criteria, and reductive criteria of competitiveness would henceforth reign over large swathes of civil society and the public sphere.

Blair certainly had more front than the Sainsbury's family that financed the party, and even improved on Berlusconi in the suave media politician stakes. The last Labour government for another generation then contrived to deliver parliamentary rule back to the upper classes into which Blair was born. The election of 2010 was a political restoration that even allowed the old boys in the Conservative Party to turn the clock back to the halcyon days of aristocratic rule, before the grocer's daughter from Grantham shook everything up. Brown's last desperate days gave way to a slickly suited ''Dave'' Cameron, a charming ex-Etonian, who would puff his way to work on cycle, with a black car entourage behind and a crate of champagne in the boot. Out of oblivion, too, came the liberals, led by Britain's first ever Eurostar politician: ex-Euro MP ''Nick'' Clegg, Cameron's deputy and subordinate tennis partner. Surely this spectacular, indeed, grotesque story, should have had a place in this book.

By far the least satisfactory part of *The New Old World*, though, is Anderson's attack on the Eastern Question. The writing here, notably in comparison to the minutely detailed frieze of the West European chapters, reveals a lack of in-depth personal resources. The insider account of the micro-political intersection of ideas, intellect and power, gives way to a much more telegraphed and old fashioned sweep of long distance grand narrative history: a story of titan politicians, faceless victims, and the unfolding of the ironies of history. Anderson of course is right to pose the Eastern Question as the key issue towards which the book moves. It is not only the central question in debates about the ''the idea of Europe'', with its riddle about how to draw a line on its Eastern borders; the next to closing chapter on ''Antecedents'' is a masterful survey of the pre-Milwardian history of ideas, a gift for teaching on this topic. But it is also frankly hard to see a viable future for an EU that does not engage fully with Turkey as the next crucial potential member of the Union.

As it is, Anderson's basic position comes as a surprise. Intransigently, he offers a no holds barred intellectual defence essentially of what has been the Nicolas Sarkozy position: that every school child knows Turkey is not a part of Europe, its geographical faultline emphasised even more by its serial failings in matters of democracy and human rights (however unlikely these concepts are for a Marxist to insist upon). Rejecting the *bien pensant* cant of nearly all EU politicians and bureaucrats, progressive voices in the media (not as common as he makes out), as well as pragmatic and historical voices – Anderson pours scorn on historian colleagues such as Mark Mazower, Timothy Garton Ash and Norman Stone – he states bluntly that what they call Turkey's

''inevitable'' and ''desirable'' membership needs to be indefinitely postponed. On Cyprus, he repeatedly batters a point that the Turkish presence in Cyprus is a form of ethnic cleansing akin to Israeli occupation of the West Bank. And, in a curiously colonialist reading of a defective non-European upstart, Anderson basically portrays Erdoğan's Turkey as little different to al-Assad's Syria or Mubarak's Egypt.

There is much to admire in the flowing account of Turkish modern history. Anderson has clearly been influenced by some of the young, often radical and disaffected scholars, who left Turkey to pursue academic careers in Europe or the US. One can always count on this generation of articulate critics to offer witheringly negative portraits of the politics of their home country. Yet many of these once exiled populations also went home during the liberalisation of the 1990s and 2000s, such that as well as its stunning growth dynamics (both demographic and economic), the liberal environment and civil society of, particularly, Istanbul, is startlingly alive, culturally rich, and hugely contestatory. All of this has flourished under the AKP, but we do not get a sense of this: the European prize, in particular, has encouraged all kinds of feminist and human rights based activism that is far from silenced. So Anderson mentions a couple of the brave historians such as Taner Akçam and Çağlar Keyder leading the debates on the Armenian and Kurdish issue, but not many others across the liberal-progressive spectrum in Turkey who are well alive to these issues but also understand their ambivalencies. There is no mention either of foreign minister/ideologue Ahmet Davutoğlu or some of the more intriguing intellectual dimensions of the AKP's program.

Erdoğan's intentions are much feared and he is hated by the secular left, but neither he nor the equally devoted President Gül slips easily into the Islamist stereotype, even as their bristling machismo clearly owes something to Ataturk. As it is, Anderson's assessment of their rule is subjugated entirely to the extreme position he takes on the Armenian question: not very different to the zombie politics of Sarkozy or the Armenian lobby in the US, which holds that categorically no business can be done with the genocide-denying mass murderers still effectively in power in Ankara. Yet the Armenian question and how to recognise these events is openly debated and anguished over in Turkey – it animates civil society, troubles politicians – and the progressive cause is not helped in the slightest by sanctimonious and hypocritical legislators in France and the US: two nation states with plenty of their own corpses stashed in the cupboard. The history of the Armenians cannot be changed, but the Kurdish question is very much alive, and by far the more important and

urgent issue in Turkey today. Times have moved on: a forcibly invisible assimilated and excluded population, as they were, has moved slowly into becoming an ethnically recognised but socially underclass migrant worker class fueling the Turkish dream. Anderson also fails to note how the Kurdish situation has improved substantially under the AKP, which draws many of its votes from Kurdish populations nationwide. At one point in the chapter, Anderson berates a series of leading American scholars of Turkey, whose engagements and personal commitments in the country, he claims, stay their hand from the open, harsh criticism he advocates. But perhaps Anderson reveals his own limitations here. He mentions the unfailing courtesy of ordinary Turks – suggesting he has visited the country – but at no point do we sense an intimate knowledge or much familiarity with the everyday life of the place. Could it be that these other scholars simply know more, and more accurately, than he does?

Anderson's view on Turkey is the only time in *The New Old World* when he aligns himself with the dominant mainstream view in Europe. Despite his claim that the tolerant, indulgent view of the EU on Turkey is the unquestioned consensus in intelligent European politics, in fact we would be hard pressed to find many politicians willing to press the case of Turkish accession, and certainly no democratic populace. The case against Turkey is, then, a kind of tabloid history that sits uneasily alongside his unswerving attack on mainstream complacencies elsewhere. We will have to agree to differ. Intelligent opinion differs on Turkey, as it does generally on the question of Islam in Europe. Is a mutually destructive conflict of civilisations inevitable, or can an enlightened compromise be found between traditions integral to the continent?

Despite, or perhaps because of his intransigence, there is much to celebrate in the work of Perry Anderson. By the close of the final summarising chapter – which re-evokes the Turkish question and Anderson's sarcastic vision of Joschka Fischer and Daniel Cohn-Bendit taking the TGV from Paris to dine on the shores of the Bosphorus while Turkish soldiers warily eye potential terrorists in a remote Anatolian village – there is a satisfying sense of a remarkable panorama having been traced, even if one so thoroughly cast in such a relentless, mordant pessimism.

ADRIAN FAVELL



https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975612000252 Published online by Cambridge University Press