

Universalism and Utopianism.

A Review Article

ARAM A. YENGOYAN

University of California, Davis

Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1939*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1988.

Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

The Books of the Fairs: Materials about World's Fairs, 1834–1916, in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, with an introductory essay by Robert W. Rydell. Chicago: American Library Association, 1992.

All of the works under review, except for Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum*, focus on the historiography of international exhibitions from 1851 to 1940. Within this span of nearly one hundred years, the ideological parameters of the exhibitions shifted from time to time. In many of the nineteenth-century exhibitions, the emphasis on the past became a glorious and gilded golden age which could be captured and combined within the present and projected into the future. In his introductory essay to *The Books of the Fairs*, Rydell provides a detailed and illuminating discussion and analysis of the exhibitions based on archival materials which are located in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. The celebratory quality which the exhibitions displayed is clearly evident from the mass of published material, pamphlets, books, guides, and fair memorabilia. As Marvin Becker always reminds me, the idea of progress was not a fiction, a myth or a postmodern reading of the past.¹ Western civilization had much to celebrate in the enhancement of science, technology, and the formation of new forms of civil society. With increasing population growth, in part

¹ I wish to thank Professor Marvin Becker for his intellectual and scholarly sense of giving through his writings and the vast number of hours which I have spent with him discussing a broad range of ideas and interests. Furthermore, I am in his debt for his continuous concerns regarding my anthropological excesses.

induced by industrialization, the West was seeking new answers to new problems not envisioned in the philosophies of the eighteenth century. The celebrations did not simply ratify the status quo nor establish another national self-identity and form of national imagery but crowned new levels of achievement in all forms of knowledge and the ability to project this knowledge on a universal basis.

Starting with the *Great Exhibition of the Works of All Nations* (London, 1851), popularly called the Crystal Palace, and through the New York World's Fair of 1939–40, the West affirmed the pinnacles of scientific, intellectual, and aesthetic growth through international exhibitions with a lasting impact on how national sovereignty was expressed and how each nation-state envisioned its role within the context of globalism. This form of globalism was in many parameters more far-reaching than current notions of globalization and international transformations.

From the last half of the nineteenth century and through World War II, Europe and the United States embarked on a form of collective identity and nationalism which enhanced the domination of European powers on a global scale. In the creation and production of colonialism, the carving out of national and international markets, and the formation of a global cultural hegemony, the role of the West was virtually isomorphic with the quest for a global history. Through the colonial system, the benefits of western civilization were not only transmitted from the state to the colonies but also moved from the metropole of each colonial context to far-removed regions and localities within each particular colonized society, so that each colony had its own urban metropole which in turn was linked to universal metropolises, whether Paris, London, Brussels, or New York. As King (1995) notes, the indigenous city within the colonial system was physically dismantled and even destroyed only to be eventually reconstituted within Western urban imagery. The ensuing modernism in the pre- and post-World War I period moved the expression of national domination and colonial discourse to another level, one which all nations, states, and societies felt that they must approximate in one form or another. If Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America felt that they were on the trajectory to reach the western pinnacle, the West moved to a still higher plane of cultural and technological development.

The broadest discussion of the exhibitions from 1851 to 1939 is provided by Paul Greenhalgh in *Ephemeral Vistas*. Through a detailed analysis of particular exhibitions, Greenhalgh draws the various strands of how each of the fairs was interconnected as well as how they reflected national identities in which all of the Western powers sought to exceed one another. Imperial displays combined with various portraits of national profiles expressed not only the past but also what empire had created as a form of universalism. Under the rubric of human showcases, the civilizing process as a totality could be maintained; yet each colonized country, culture or society had its own local profile which need not contest Western civilization.

India, the crown jewel of the British Empire, is a good example of how the portrait of the colonized is virtually isomorphic with the host nation. English political structures and a strong sense of class hierarchy resonated with Indian ideas of inequality based on the existence of royalty as well as a dominant form of caste structure. Furthermore, as Breckenridge (1989) notes, the focus on Indian art and aesthetics, decontextualized from their mystical underpinning, established transnational cultural expressions which eventually created an emerging ruling elite in India and in England. The newly established cultural hegemony, through a single voice in England and in India, formed a quasihomogeneous cosmopolitan cultural world that was shared by all who were part of the colonial canopy. A convergence of interest also existed in how Indian folk art was created for the exhibitions and eventually spread to rural India via the exhibitions. Finally, the common focus on Sanskrit as the ur-language for the creation of Indo-European as a language family was central for the cementing of India to England as well as to other European nations who had an Indo-European language.

Yet, other accounts of pre-1914 exhibitions are characterized by an inherent tension generated in establishing a form of the universal–global combined with a re-reading of the particular as it fits into the universal. For instance, in *Displaying the Orient*, Çelik details the various types of Islamic architecture which were displayed in the nineteenth-century exhibitions in Paris and London. Mosques, temples, pavilions, coffee houses, palaces, and obelisks combined with mysterious Muslim cultural expressions and social practices all fed into what the West and western audiences conceptualized as the decadency of the Near East as it sustained the Orientalist image. Harems, belly dancing, and ululations were all part of this massive unknown which could not be understood let alone explained.

However, the rendering of Islamic architecture had another side, one which appealed to ideas of what architecture must embrace. The European attraction to a form of architecture that expressed symmetrical complexity based on purely mathematical principles has its foundations in the influence of Near Eastern art and architecture on European Renaissance and post-Renaissance architecture. Wittkower brilliantly analyzes how this form of design worked itself in and through western architecture as an expression of mathematical foundations adhering to what Medieval scholasticism stressed, namely that true knowledge must always conform to and reflect mathematical principles.²

Thus, in the cases of India and British Africa, as well as southeast Asia, the viability of these societies was assumed to exist hand-in-hand with the unfold-

² Although Rudolf Wittkower's essays and lectures were written prior and up to the early 1960s, their vitality and impact are probably more critical now in assessing Islamic and non-Islamic influences on European architecture. See *Selected Lectures of Rudolf Wittkower: The Impact of Non-European Civilizations on the Art of the West*, compiled and edited by Donald Martin Reynolds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

ing of progress. However, the stress on an “objectified object” was most evident in the expression of Islam and the Middle East. The objectification of Islam based on the foundations of Orientalistic visions prior to the exhibitions meant that “the thing” could be grasped as a thing in and of itself. Yet, not only was the meaning of the objective “thing” ahistorically portrayed; but it went even further, providing the image of a meaningless form, including the subjugation of women, and a pervasive decadence which is still part of our later twentieth-century images of what the Middle East is. This lent to the idea that western progressivism might not occur in the Middle East but that India, southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa were possibly on the correct path.

Finally, the great exhibitions were active agents in portraying other cultures and civilizations than the West, either in form of viable cultures or as part of our past or as earlier stages of the evolutionary trajectory. In each case, what was portrayed required a form of translation that attempted to create the impression that these diverse societies could be understood within the cultural logic of each particular colonial empire. For example, India had a sense of vertical structuration, hierarchy, and monarchy which had strong parallels with British social structure and royalty. In such cases, such as Sub-Saharan British Africa and Francophone Africa, the structure might be bent a little or modified to a certain degree to fit the other; but the projected structure need not be dismantled or destroyed in the translation process. How well this worked and to what extent it enhanced a false or misplaced consciousness requires a more refined reading of the texts. Islam as a religion and as an expression of a social culture could not be forged or bent into a western mold. Moreover, the Orientalistic reading had already become dominant in our conception of Islam. Neither understood nor appreciated, Islam was baffling to our western conceptions of society and thought and was simply set aside as a possible future threat. This situation is still central to our current misrepresentation of global Islam.

UNIVERSALISM

Universalism through the exhibitions prior to World War I was always coupled with progress, evolution, and the ethical and moral commitment that the problems presented by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse could be solved or at least minimized. Not only did universalism mean a form of progress and cultural enrichment, but it also created an acknowledged canopy of development embracing and possibly fostering local cultural and political differences. As noted by Greenhalgh and again in Rydell’s essay in the *Books of the Fairs*, the more majestic exhibitions all had halls and galleries in which colonial peoples from Africa, south Asia, the Americas, southeast Asia could portray their existence and vitality as living cultural organisms benefited by the colonial-civilizing process.

Yet, the exhibitions varied in how the “other” was portrayed. The French

and English exhibitions had a greater interest in colonial societies expressed as living, dynamic entities. Exhibitions in the United States, such as the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, depicted the North American Indian only as a past which had succumbed to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Even in the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, the “living” cultures of the Philippine lowlands and uplands were still seen as “primitive” and on the verge of being Americanized. America’s version of Manifest Destiny requires further elaboration on how the Native American was portrayed. Just as Manifest Destiny moved from the east coast to the west coast, the exhibitions in the United States start in Philadelphia in 1876 and culminate ethnologically with the Panama-Pacific Exposition (San Francisco, 1915) and the Panama-California Exposition (San Diego, 1915–1916).

The pictorial cover to *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition, 1876* depicts five figures on a cliff overlooking industrial America with the globe as the background. In the center is Imperial Great Britain portrayed as a woman with a crown and the imperial escutcheon. To her right is Liberty, again a woman clad in the fabric of stars and stripes. To the left of “Mother Imperial England,” but in a semi-lower position, is a Near Eastern woman clad in a green dress. Green here symbolizes the religious color of Islam. To the left of Islam is a black native on her knees symbolizing the dark people of the world. To the right of Liberty is a Native American gazing at Liberty for guidance and leadership. Seemingly, the Native American is living and viable and could possibly be perpetuated.

If the Philadelphia depiction of the Native American is one who is partly noble and seeking enlightenment, simultaneous events in the summer of 1876 change this portrait. In late June, events at Little Big Horn created a national hysteria in which various segments of Euro-American society saw it as their duty to avenge the death of Custer and his men. Recruits, especially from the American South, enlisted in mass to fight and culminate the final death of those called the noble savage. Thus, in the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915, only forty years later, we have the symbolization of the Native American in the statue of the “End of the Trail” by the sculptor James Earl Fraser. The tragedy and final culmination is fully captured as “The drooping, storm-beaten figure of the Indian on the spent pony symbolizes the end of the race which was once a mighty people. The sorrowful story is so simply told it grips and haunts the beholder” (Burness, 1915).³

Throughout the pre-1914 era, the domination of ideas on universalism and progress were always informed by conceptions of a humanized and humanizing sense of civilization which counteracted barbaric, anachronistic institu-

³ For a more detailed study of Native North American depiction in the exhibitions, the reader is referred to “The Uses of Natural Man in Natural History” by Don D. Fowler and Catherine S. Fowler, in *Columbian Consequences: The Spanish Borderlands in Pan-American Perspective*, David Hurst Thomas, ed., vol. 3., 37–71 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

tions which characterized pre-enlightenment Europe. Penal institutions and prisons were always a blight on what it meant to be civilized. If civilization was coupled with a more humane lifestyle, surely the brutality of prisons and the penal system had to be questioned. If a nation or a state or province of a nation wanted to show the world its progress, one way was to direct attention to the achievements of commerce, technology, science, and cultural development. In conjunction with scientific and commercial achievements, attention was also directed to how certain social “evils” were being erased and changed in a more humane fashion.

Almost all of the exhibitions before World War I had displays, galleries, and educational information, along with pictures on how modern penal institutions existed in nations, states, and provinces. Various states in Australia, like New South Wales and Victoria, routinely had small yet visible accounts of improvements in the treatment of prisoners, how modern and improved jail facilities were built, and how prisoners were being re-educated as useful citizens in society. Some states in the United States, such as Massachusetts, had impressive accounts of their progress in the Chicago exhibition in 1893 and again in the 1904 St. Louis exhibition. In the case of Australia, which did not form as a nation until 1901, each of the states sent their exhibitions abroad when they were invited and more often than not, the penal correction theme was placed in the foreground. One would suspect that this theme was a means of correcting the image that all Australians are the progeny of convicts or that the whole country was nothing more than a penal colony. Japan also displayed its progress in prisons by noting the reforms and the housing facilities for convicts. Although by 1900 standards they are far from the ideal western images of pagodas and manicured landscapes, the focus on the underbelly of society and how it was uplifted only attests to how widespread the universalism of civilization had taken hold through international exhibitions. From the perspective of 1997 and the view from afar, one can only note with dismay how much we have regressed towards the underbelly since 1900. The resurrection of the chain gang in 1994 in certain states in the American South only confirms the idea that civilization still is understood as pinnacles of growth and development rather than in the alleviation of the morass of social ills which plague nations and societies in our time.

Of special interest, and a contrasting subcurrent to the exhibitionary vision of the future as a technologically and morally improved world, is the debate in which all nations examined the idea of a better, nobler and truer past which had been “derailed” by either political revolutions such as France in 1789 or the effects of the industrial revolution. With the emergence of the era of mass production of commodities, services, knowledge which might or might not be useful, and the commercialization of various institutional facets of society, the feeling of cultural decay became paramount throughout many sectors of society. Simmel and other social critics in Germany decried the emerging “cultural rot” (*kulturfältnis*) from industrialism, while in England William Morris and

various pre-Raphaelite thinkers perceived the problem in another way. Morris identified the Arts and Crafts movement in England as an attempt to combine the mass production of goods with an aesthetic as a means of circumventing culturally tasteless and debased goods for consumption by the masses, an attempt which would lead to a flattening of culture as an aesthetic. The impact of Morris's thought and social concern is central to how the London rapid transit system, the famous Underground, became an avant-garde experiment under Frank Pick and others during the 1920s and 1930s.⁴ Thus, the pinnacle of a national aesthetic had to be formed from a pre-industrial past, such as Tudor and medieval restoration in England, medieval versions of Paris in the nineteenth-century French exhibitions, and in the United States a sense of the colonial links with England, the roughened log cabins of colonial America, or the Gothic revivalism of New England and upstate New York.

FUTURISM AND UTOPIANISM

Universalism in the great exhibitions was nearly always linked to futurism and utopianism. Although the exhibitions between the interwar years were more focused on futurism coupled with a heightened sense of imperialism, the concern for utopian thinking runs throughout the ninety years under review.

Robert Rydell's *World of Fairs* is a superb analysis of the exhibitions from the 1920s to the New York World's Fair of 1939–40. The 1920s saw the gradual decline of far-reaching empires, especially in the case of the English and the French. The catastrophic loss of resources, finances and manpower from World War I virtually drained the empires of their infrastructure. To provide a semblance of order and to sustain an eroding illusion of empire, both the English and French launched massive exhibitions which were the last of their kind. Great Britain organized the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924–25, and in 1931 France opened the Exposition Coloniale Internationale in Paris. Both of these exhibitions probably provided the most excessive symbolism of empire in the attempt to cover up the quickly thinning infrastructure. All nations which had colonies were invited, and in turn each of the colonies was portrayed as if the effects of the last war were minimal and therefore the benefits of civilization were also intact. Furthermore, these exhibitions, like those in the 1930s, were devoted to the ideological commitment that science and its accompanying technologies would still cement the past to the future.

As Rydell clearly notes, the empire of science became the futurism of what will exist after the termination of the great global depression of the 1930s. The New York Fair of 1939 Rydell labels "Future Perfect"; for, if the world was in

⁴ Readers are referred to Michael Saler's brilliant analysis of Medieval and modernist strands in the contestation of aesthetics and social class in England between the two world wars. See Michael Saler, "The 'Medieval Modern' Underground: Terminus of the Avant-Garde," *Modern/Modernity*, 2 (1995), 113–44.

trouble in Europe and Asia, America was still on its trajectory of growth. This futurism was in industry, science, and technology, rather than in political and economic peace. Modernism in the form of art deco, architecture and design, and streamform dominated the 1939 New York exhibition as it did in Paris in 1937. Again, both Greenhalgh and Rydell astutely show how the extreme adherence and convergence on modernism and futurism became the overarching framework in which all knowledge and experience are to be internationalized and internalized by nations and citizens.

Yet the fractures of the impending war could not be entirely swept from visibility. Totalitarian regimes, whether German, Italian, or Spanish Fascism or Stalinism, participated in some of the exhibitions of the late 1930s as a means of expressing the strength of the nation at a time when most western-informed liberal democracies had no rejoinder. In a most moving series of passages, Greenhalgh (1988:133–6) discusses how Picasso, working on a canvas of twenty-three feet long and eleven and a half feet high, conceptualized the aerial destruction of Guernica by the Spanish Fascist regime on April 19, 1937. This mural, painted for the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne, Paris, 1937, became the pivotal statement of the ensuing wanton butchering of civilians which ended only in 1945, though one could argue that it has yet to end in our lifetime.

Prior to 1914, the World's Columbian Exposition (1893) in Chicago probably best represents the pinnacle of utopianism in a variety of expressions. James Gilbert's *Perfect Cities* (1991) is a broad discussion of the many facets which utopianism took in how the "white" city became the projected model for urban lifestyles in America. Not only did the exhibition convey the vitality of Chicago, especially after the devastating fire of 1871, but it also showed how harmony between capitalism and organized labor could emerge, for example, how the Pullman company created a model city south of Chicago for its employees. Furthermore, the creation of Hull House by Jane Addams and her co-workers was also an attempt to bridge the gap between capitalism and labor. These forms of social largesse were primarily a means of cementing over chronic problems within industrial capitalism; yet they provided a utopian canopy in which attention and directed action towards visionary goals might create a more humanitarian face to American industrial growth.

If these concerns occurred primarily in the secular realm of American life, the spiritual side could not be neglected; and secularized salvation as one aspect of the exhibitions did not proceed uncontested. The Christian response is best exemplified in how organized religion challenged the secular progressivism of the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893. Simultaneously with the exposition, the World Parliament of Religions was held in which various Christian faiths, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism were all discussed as part of the universalistic aspect of the exhibition but also added another voice to the growing concern about secular humanism in the guise of

progress, science, and technology. Furthermore, American evangelicalism also had its own idiom apart from the Parliament of Religion. Dwight L. Moody, the founder of the Moody Bible Institute, was a growing and important spokesman for American Protestantism. It is apparent that the debate between American religious thought and secular universalism was not a clear-cut issue. The Chicago Columbian Exhibition was America's show to the countries of the world; to attack it at that time would not have been prudent, but to permit its uncontested manifestation would also have created further problems. Secularism under a national vision could be partially accepted, but unbridled secularism was a challenge that institutionalized religion could not ignore.

Utopianism was not confined to the projected imagery of the exhibitions. The general feeling of a cultural crisis, especially in Europe, was a result of rampant industrialism, a growing fear of the Americanization of European values and the formation of denuded culture, thus bringing forth a vast amount of social and political criticism on the status quo and how the future might be reshaped. Germany is a case in point. The overwhelming feeling of cultural impoverishment generated a vast amount of social theorizing and cultural critique which was always coupled with utopianism. Tonnies' utopia was cast as a return to *Gemeinschaft* social structures, the theologian Troeltsch beckoned for a new reformulation of German Christianity, Weber sought *Persönlichkeit* (individual values which surpassed sensuousness) as a new vitalism for Protestantism, Simmel's utopia combined a secularized kingdom of God with aestheticism, while Lukacs in his pre-Soviet thinking turned to the ideal organic communities in Russia as expressed by Dostoevsky's heroes.

Social criticism of the exhibitions, especially after the Crystal Palace in London, is launched not as a visionary utopian quest, but in the concern that reality will be distorted for the masses. Both Marx and Dickens realized the evil which the exhibitionary atmosphere conveyed in the form of a mystical idea of secular salvation or paradise preserved which worked against any long lasting expression of proletarian consciousness. It was not Utopia which Dickens and Marx harangued against, but their critique of utopianism was primarily aimed at returning the focus to the increasing decline and decay of the working class condition.

THE MUSEUM AS A PERMANENT EXHIBITION

Tony Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum* is an empirical and theoretical analysis of why museums emerged as they did, what the political and social forces were that fueled what museums meant, and how the populace responded. Collecting and collections existed prior to the museum, not simply as a result of western exploration which was a critical factor; but the roots of the idea of collecting are inexorably bound to the idea of possession and

possession (social and political) at the control of knowledge. However, collecting prior to 1700 or 1750 meant a heterotopia of virtually everything, with or without common parameters. The categorization of commodities and cultural items, be it exotica, esoterica or erotica, only reflected chaos in which each item existed only within its own particularity. The early eighteenth-century museums were concerned with creating order out of chaos, and the categories of order could be geographic, historical, Linnaean, or even based on early cultural evolutionary models of human progress. Bennett notes that the move from object to representation established an ordering of things now accessible to the public. Yet, museums were not ideologically neutral. The grandeur of the nation and the empire were all expressed in and through exhibitions and museums, not only as a statement of the present but virtually as a means of creating posterity which could never be defied or dismissed by foreign powers.

The structure of Crystal Palace, in which one could see the whole and in turn the whole could see the particular, was created by the glass encasing with minimal use of nontransparent divisions which hived the palace into various compartments. The palace was thus the whole which could be visualized as a whole. Consequently, sight created different visions and vistas in which the whole could be projected from any particular locality; and simultaneously the whole was always present regardless of where one glanced. In the 1889 Paris Exposition, the Eiffel Tower projects itself as the whole which minimizes the difference between the subject and the object, or, as noted by Bennett (1995:84), "A sight itself, it becomes the site for a sight; a place both to see and be seen from, which allows the individual to circulate between the object and subject positions of the dominating vision it affords over the city and its inhabitants." This pattern of seeing and being seen is found in the exhibitions in New York (1939–40), Brussels (1958), and Seattle (1962).

As Foucault reminds us, and as Bennett continues to stress throughout his volume, displays of knowledge were also displays of power. Bennett (1995:65–66) notes that the function of spectacle was eventually coupled with surveillance, especially after the Crystal Palace of 1851, where ideally everyone could see anyone else. The openness of this kind of visibility brought forth the idea that the public and the state were one and that the totality of the museum and the exhibition and eventually the city was accessible to the public as a whole. In this sense the nation-state became the benevolent extension of the public when it conveyed a sense of unity and totality; yet on the other side, the power of the state and state organized forms of surveillance became less visible and less obtrusive but more vigilant and exacting. The working classes and the public at large, however, had to be socialized for the halls of knowledge so as to appreciate what they saw. Throughout the nineteenth-century exhibitions, the working classes were given special days in which they could see displays, and discounted admission tickets were pro-

vided to workers and their families. They were socialized in how to behave, how to form queues, what to wear, and how to act once they entered the galleries and pavilions.

Furthermore, what the public viewed was partially culturally sanitized. Sherman (1989:217–8) cites from the *Nouvelliste de Rouen*, (February 19, 1880), as follows: “There should be, at the entrance to each room, or in front of every panel, a placard indicating the artist and subject for every painting, or, better, each painting should have an individual label. We would then have a kind of abridged catalogue—not enough for real art lovers, it’s true, but enough to disseminate some ‘glimmerings of truth’ among the mass of the public, who are only interested in a work when they know the subject or when a famous name halts them en route and forces their admiration.” Sherman (1989:218) continues, “Labels, in other words, represented a kind of service to the visually illiterate; they did not do much for real connoisseurs, who, though aware of the need for them, could not be expected to regard them as a high priority. As a kind of official recognition of the social division of the museum’s public, they emphasized rather than dispelled its less educated members’ inferior status.”

Although Bennett (1995:86–88) presents both Foucauldian and Gramscian arguments regarding the organizational perspectives of the state, his ideological leanings move more towards a form of state control characteristic of the writings of Foucault. I find this unfortunate. The great exhibitions, like museums, did have an effect in forming cultural control, but the lasting impact has been more in the enhancement of civil society in the Gramscian sense. Civil society meant that through voluntary action individuals and groups could partake in larger national symbols and institutions, thus individuals and groups from different social strata would be socialized into their roles in the civilized citizenry. Furthermore, civil society is based on the assumption of the convergence of national symbols and the extent to which these symbols are internalized by a populace, with the aim of creating a citizenry. As pedagogical devices based on forms of volunteerism and voluntary organizations, the exhibitions, like museums, promoted a realm of civil society which could be channeled and directed by the state. It was the creation of positive values, apart from state control and surveillance, which has had the long-standing impact on the formation of institutions of civil society as class phenomena. Cultural hegemony, in terms of Gramscian thought, became the canopy in which state control through institutions of civil society created a sense of citizenry ideologically isomorphic with the state and whose loyalties were bound to the success or failure of the nation at large.⁵

⁵ For a more detailed discussion on some of the previous points, see Aram A. Yengoyan, “Culture, Ideology and World’s Fairs: Colonizer and Colonized in Comparative Perspectives,” in *Fair Representations: World’s Fairs and the Modern World*, Robert W. Rydell and Nancy Gwinn, eds. (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994).

CULTURE, CIVILIZATION AND UNIVERSALISM

There is another puzzling issue which relates to the contrast between culture and civilization expressed in universalism and the exhibitionary complex. Germany entered the colonizing game as an imperial power relatively late with sojourns in east Africa, the Pacific, and China but, throughout the nineteenth century and up to 1914, did not host a universal exhibition. At most it hosted local technical and scientific fairs and exhibitions and also sent exhibitions to foreign fairs when invited. As many writers have noted and documented, the exhibitions were connected to nationalism and national vision, yet Germany did not use exhibitions as a means of establishing itself as part of cultural universalism which peaked in pre-World War I Europe. This is a complex issue and one which is difficult to fully understand, let alone interpret.

One factor which might partially explain this case lies in the contrast of how French and German intellectual thought defined the concepts of culture and civilization. One almost always notes that it is French civilization (and seldom French culture) in contrast to German culture (and almost never, German civilization). A culture model is bounded, limited, not expansive, and hardly universalistic in scope; while the notion of civilization tends to stress an unbounded quality which the French have always asserted and valued—it is universalistic and is recognized as the highest form of cultural development. Where universalism and unboundness are rejected by German culture and thought for the sake of developing true German values, the French see themselves as the heir apparent to the true growth of civilization, which has its roots in the ancient Near East and classical Greece and Rome and culminating in Paris. Furthermore, where the French have no debate with acknowledging Greek influence on their thought, the relationship of Greek thought to German thought and values has always been the subject of heated arguments, at times threatening a nearly total rejection of Greek influences.

Thus, international universalistic exhibitions fit easily into the French mold as a way of reconfirming the paramount position of France in the world. The rejection of exhibitions and universalism in Germany, on the other hand, can be partly explained by Germany's adherence to a culture model of its own culture and what is truly German. If Wagner personifies all that is German, it is patently difficult to find a particular French composer who personifies the essence of what is truly French. The civilization model used as the basis of universalistic exhibitions is the one that existed in France, England, and the United States. The civilizing process which forms the basis of western civilization is not, in theory, contained, bounded or limited. It is exactly on this point that German intellectual and cultural thought differs from that of its historical neighbors and is evident in a range of writers and social theorists from Thomas Mann to Georg Simmel.

THE DEMISE OF THE GLOBAL VISION

Global universalism, as it was manifest in the exhibitions, was shattered after the two world wars, thus initiating the fragmentation of global polities into first world, second world, the third world, and now fourth world peoples. During the 1940s and 1950s, the collapse of national colonial empires and the conflicts of the Cold War ended universalism as a cultural and political expression. In 1958, the Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles (Expo '58) was held in Belgium amidst the heightened Cold War threat of the Soviet Union's and the eastern block countries' challenge to American hegemony as it controlled western Europe. Rydell (1993) details how charges and counter-charges of CIA spying and Russian plots became the background and foreground to what the world was to view.

The fragmentation of empires and the subsequent disintegration of former colonial states into spheres of regionalism, ethnicity, and tribalism became the political testimony that universalism was virtually dead. Though the United Nations as a global body exists, in many ways its problems and prognosis are similar to the League of Nations. Contemporary nation states are distrustful of broader universalistic institutions which they feel threaten their hegemonic (and often despotic) control of internal colonialism, whether explicit or implicit. It goes without saying that international bodies have real limits on what they can or cannot do, thus the modern nation state is always in a form of contestation with what are considered toothless and parasitic global endeavors.

If universalism is nearing its end, utopian thinkers and ideas have also followed the same trajectory, both within the global polity as well as in the scholarly arena. Few, if any scholars, writers or social theorists take utopian visions seriously. Like the passing of the great exhibitions, we also view the passing of writers such as Marx, Weber, Simmel, Lukacs, and Karl Mannheim as thinkers which have only historical significance, but nothing for the contemporary. Older models of universalism have lost their impact on societies, thus we now venture into an era of technological universalism based on fax, e-mail, multimedia communication, videoconferencing, the virtual university, internet, and the World Wide Web—and eventually extraterrestrialnet—for which the utopian or visionary underpinnings are still under debate. Furthermore, the ills of the underbelly of culture, as predicted by Nietzsche earlier and by Foucault in recent times, seize our consciousness with an ever-tightening grip. State expenditures on prisons now exceed those for higher education; consequently, the underbelly is socially emphasized but never dispelled.

Pre-1939 nation-states and empires created ideologies, structures, and symbols through the power of legitimization and modernity as a means of piecing together the past, the present, and the future into plausible forms of utopia. The great exhibitions, museums, the Olympics, and other forms of public

celebration were the ideal imagery. As it was and still is, we have no escape from George Orwell's insight (1961:32), "Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present controls the past."

REFERENCES

- Breckenridge, Carol A. 1989. "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World's Fairs." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31:1, 195–216.
- Burness, Jessie N. 1915. *Sculpture and Mural Paintings in the Beautiful Courts, Colonnades and Avenues of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco*. San Francisco: Robert A. Reid.
- King, Anthony D. 1995. "Writing Colonial Space. A Review Article." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37:3, 541–54.
- Orwell, George. 1961. *1984*. New York: Signet.
- Sherman, Daniel J. 1989. *Worthy Monuments: Art Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.