# THE FUTURE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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I am very much honored by the invitation to give this lecture. Prior speakers are among the great names of social science. Other great names fill the rolls of the Ecole itself over the years, and the Ecole's scholarly contributions have carried its fame around the globe. Yet while these honors are great indeed, still greater is the honor of being invited to speak in the name of Marc Bloch, a man whose work and life set such a high standard of scholarship and courage. For this above all I thank my hosts.

Nonetheless, overawed as I am by what is - for an American of my generation - the almost mythic grandeur of Marc Bloch, the Ecole, the sixieme section, the Annales, and the great names associated with them, I must now step into that picture myself. Fortunately, the issues confronting the social sciences today demand an intervention that can perhaps aspire to a small place in this long roster of achievement.

To speak of the future of the social sciences today is to address a situation that is at more than our usual level of crisis. As a theorist in the processualist tradition, I start from the axiom that the world is a world of events, and that social life is made and remade constantly, moment to moment. Since for me the world is always changing, I am not surprised that the cry of crisis is often heard. The real question concerns when our everyday crises create possibilities of truly major change. The answer to that more important question requires that we understand why it is necessary in the first place to begin from the axiom that the world is always changing.

One is driven to such an axiom by a simple logic. Social change obviously does happen, and to think that a basically stable social system could for some reason occasionally produce major change is to commit *petitio principii*, to assume what we aim to derive. Therefore the only possible account for social change is to assume that change is constant, and that the stability we observe is merely apparent. I thus oppose the position attributing social stability to reproduction mechanisms that are nearly always effective as well as the similar position attributing stability to hierarchically organized mechanisms of domination. Each of these arguments starts from the logically impossible position that change results from the occasional - and therefore inexplicable - breakdown of normally stable reproduction.

My position that change is the natural state of the social process thus differs radically from the approaches of Professor Parsons and M. Bourdieu. But it too faces an obvious difficulty. If the social world is always changing, how can it be that so much of the social world seems relatively stable most of the time. The answer is that there are many local reproduction mechanisms scattered through the social process, of different levels and of varying effectiveness. Empirically it is evident that none of these reproduction mechanisms is effective all the time. Indeed most are not effective even most of the time. But even though most reproduction systems are full of slippage and

inefficiency, there are very many of them, and they are both loosely connected and widely distributed. So there is enough redundancy and connection to create the appearance of stability, just as we observe when a huge mass of loose logs creates a jam on a river. No one plans the jam, and logs are constantly drifting into the jam at one end and freeing themselves from it at the other. But the jam constantly blocks the river all the same. And so it is that a social process that is in fact one of perpetual change - a social process that is in fact remaking itself from instant to instant - nevertheless appears to be fairly stable, so stable indeed as to have led Karl Marx to have thought that social life was underlain by grand and inevitable forces impervious to the free action of men.

Once in a while, however, all these varying reproducing mechanisms reach a low point at a single moment. Just as a lock can be turned when all the tumblers are lined up, and a logjam breaks up when all the logs are for some reason aligned parallel to the current, the social process reaches a true crisis when all of its loose reproduction mechanisms accidentally happen to fail at once. Then large change can happen and can happen quite suddenly, even given relatively small actions.

Such a theory is of course rooted in the Braudelian concept of *conjoncture*. What matters for *evenement* is the alignment of the various aspects of the *conjoncture*: only when there is a certain relation between the grain prices in the Levant, the waning of the forests of Illyria, and the proliferation of new trading routes for spices can there transpire a particular event that may decisively refashion the relations between all these things - and possibly many others.

I believe that in the social sciences we have reached such a crisis in the last twenty years or so. We are today experiencing several related but distinct transitions in the various social processes that form our disciplinary life. And these various transitions have aligned to create an almost frightening openness for the future. With so many choices before us, we must choose wisely indeed, lest history and chance make our choices for us, and the intellectual habitus occupied by those of us in this room vanish within the next thirty years.

In the earlier drafts of this paper, I undertook a full analysis of four separate transitions that by their accidental alignment have created this moment of bewildering openness. Two of these are conjunctural, in Braudelian terms: first, the rise of neoliberal management in academia and second, the emergence of a "one size fits all" scientific model of knowledge. A third transition is in Braudelian structure: the great shift from print to image, from discursive symbols to presentational ones, from complex argument to simplified assertion. The fourth change is again a conjunctural one, but unlike the other conjunctures it involves matters internal to the social sciences. I refer here to the ever increasing disparity between the sophistication of empirical social science and the simplicity and naivete of its normative reasoning.

The exigencies of time require that I focus on one of these transitions in particular, and so I have chosen the one on which we can ourselves have the greatest effect - the internal problem of the relation between our empirical and normative imaginations. But since I must set aside the first three of my transitions in order to focus on the fourth, I shall summarize in schematic form my arguments relevant to those omitted three.

First, to invoke M. Braudel yet again, as for the neoliberal administrators, there will be no Lepanto to stop them. Their anti-intellectual galleys will continue to harass us. In particular, they will

continue to incentivize worthless and unnecessary publication, enticing us thereby to ruin our own scholarly communication system. We waste our time writing unnecessary articles, and we have therefore no time to read the articles of our peers, whether necessary or not. Our response must be either to invent a new communication system or to create a scholarly evaluation system impervious to the incentives of bean-counting by deans. Those tasks are large, to be sure, but nonetheless straightforward.

Second, as for the scientizing impulse, it is an old one, and the fools from physics and computer science who plan to answer all the questions of the social sciences and the humanities with their exponential random graph models and their terabyte corpora of texts will end up on the same rubbish heap as the sociometrists and social physicists of the 1930s, the sociobiologists of the 1960s, the game theorists of the 1950s and the 1990s, and so on. They too are Turks, and when the intellectual weather turns bad, they will as always withdraw from the gates of Vienna, rush back down the Danube, and pass the Iron Gates (Portes de Fer) before winter comes. They don't really have any relevance to the important questions of the humanities or the social sciences. They are an annoyance, but little more.

As for the third great transition - the structural shift from print to image - it is indeed an overwhelming one. There is nothing we can do about it. The immediate problem for us is that until the thinkers in images recognize that complex argument cannot be represented in ill-defined pictures, our young people will be growing up in a world impoverished of complex thought. They do not bring to college the skills of discursive argument that we brought, although they are certainly better at video games than we were at pinball. There may eventually be ways to represent complex argument in pure images, in fifty or a hundred years. But until that time we have to raise our own successors through what will seem like remedial education.

These then are the three transitions that are in my view either minor matters to be dealt with by minor vigilance or major matters so large as to require only small efforts that are stopgaps at best. My fourth crucial transition for the social sciences is the one that I think presents us with the real opportunities for intellectual action and growth. That is the disparity between the empirical and normative sides of what we do. This disparity has been growing since the social sciences began and has been made even more visible by the emerging challenge of globalizing social science, which makes evident not only that the metropolitan social sciences have a profoundly normative aspect but also that the values involved in that normativity will be strongly contested as the social sciences move beyond the Western liberal societies where they emerged.

Two definitions are useful before beginning my argument. By the word "empirical" here I mean that aspect of the social sciences that is under the criterion of truth or falsehood. By the word "normative," I mean that aspect of the social sciences that is under the criterion of right and wrong. Thus, the exact number of humans located within the borders of metropolitan France is in principle an empirical number, but whether we count unborn children and people on life-support as part of that population is a normative matter. That a young man paints a picture on a wall is an empirical matter. Whether that painting is juvenile delinquency, gang symbol, or art or indeed all three - those are normative matters. I take it for granted that many social values - normative things - have become so

fixed in social life, so completely agreed upon, as to be, for the moment, things we can regard as de facto empirical. Sex used to be one of these and could well become one again. But as the vicissitudes of sex show, the border between the normative and the empirical is always in flux.

In the social sciences, the complex relation between the empirical and the normative began at the beginning, for notwithstanding their universal claims, the social sciences have quite particular origins. They arose out of intellectual responses to a set of disturbing social phenomena characteristic of Europe and America in the nineteenth century. We all know these emerging intellectual responses: the attempts to enumerate and measure "modernity;" to theorize socialism and capitalism; to conceive projects of reform and welfare; to regulate increasingly interdependent and hence increasingly erratic economies. These problems and the various proposed responses are easily recognized as the roots of today's social sciences. And alongside these emerging social sciences was the similarly formalizing practice of academic history, which also sought the origins of modernity, but which was tightly hitched to the cart of nationalism. Just as the social sciences became political projects through their proposals for reform, so history became central to the ideologies of the newly proactive Western states, where powerful bourgeoisies set out to realize in practice the kind of nation implicit in the contractarian philosophies that had heralded their triumph. From the beginning then, the social sciences were simultaneously empirical and normative enterprises.

The exigencies of domestic politics meant that social scientific and historical debates mainly focused on domestic problems: capital and labor, boom and bust, left and right, social unrest and social mobility. But all of these things in turn depended on the enormous overseas empires and trade that provided the inexpensive raw materials and the vast markets through which the prosperity of Europe was assured and through which the funds for resolving or postponing domestic social problems could be raised. There was therefore also another body of social science, which grew out of these empires and their problems. Here were anthropology and some history, most evidently, but also a separate strand of political science that would eventually become the field of "comparative politics." Institutionally, these peripheral fields were often concentrated not in the universities, but in the colonial administrations of Britain, France, and the Netherlands, and in the Boards of Trade of these and the other dominant nations. In the United States, such global social science emerged not through colonial administration, but through the inevitable focus on immigration, ethnicity, and assimilation brought about by the importing of the millions of laborers necessary to American economic development.

The social sciences thus emerged from the crucible of nineteenth century modernity in a very particular intellectual form. Focused on social problems and issues, they inevitably mixed the empirical and the normative. Intellectually, they had a central core focused on domestic transformations and disturbances, and they were thus founded on the assumption that domestic and foreign affairs were distinct. They presupposed the concepts of nation and nationalism, which accepted and indeed helped sharpen the conceptual boundaries between the domestic and the international. This core of social science was surrounded by a considerably less institutionalized hinterland of scholarship looking beyond national boundaries and less preoccupied with Europe and its immediate problems.

In today's world, by contrast, that hinterland should perhaps be the core of the social sciences. For in today's world people and products travel in a complex international division of labor. And the "nations" between which those people and products travel are far more diverse than were the nineteenth century European states with their common heritage of contractarian political theory and Roman law. The empirical challenge represented by this change is a great one, even without considering its normative aspects. We live today in a puzzling world, where what used to be domestic issues have become international ones - the division of labor, for example - while conversely what used to be international issues have become domestic ones, as in the internal differences produced by massive immigration. That dual reversal does present obvious and important empirical issues.

But I feel that the related normative issues are so important as to command our immediate attention. For the reversal of domestic and international matters challenges the obvious normative prioritization of imperial citizens over imperial subjects that was characteristic of the nineteenth century empires, a priority that continues in the mind of the West long after those empires have become faint memories. Moreover, it turns out that long before the recent epoch of globalization, the evolving social sciences of domestic issues had already begun to suffer from the internal disparity between their empirical and normative repertoires. For both domestic and international reasons, then, this disparity between our empirical and normative analyses that must be today our central concern.

Disparity is most evident when social scientists propose to evaluate the justice of the social world. To be sure, such judgment is not the only normative role possible for social scientists. Sometimes, social scientists are engineers:  they take the social system as empirically given, accept its account of itself, and develop social science to improve society's achievement of what it claims are its immediate goals. Much of economics is of this type. At other times, however, social scientists are not engineers but referees: they hold the social system up to some other standard - typically an abstract one with a longer time horizon and considerably more vague definitions than the specific short-term goals of the social engineers. Outside of economics, this activity of refereeing has become paramount in the social sciences. Much of our work assesses whether our societies are open, or fair, or egalitarian; whether we are accepting to immigrants and refugees; whether we tolerate difference; whether we work hard. Indeed, in my own discipline of U. S. sociology, such work is the discipline's main output tout court. More than half the articles in leading journals include the world "inequality."

Largely unexamined, however, are the standards we use in this refereeing of society. It will be my argument that the great normative crisis of the social sciences today arises in the dangerous simplicity of the social ontology that undergirds our normative judgments as referees of social life. The social sciences - and we who practice them - are too wedded to a single normative framework to address successfully the complex problems of modernity itself, much less those of globalized modernity. My argument has three steps. I first remind us that all social science is in principle at least partially normative.  I then discuss at length the ontology underlying normative deployment of Western social science - contractarian liberalism. I study its main premises as well as its relation to the social sciences and in particular to the quite different empirical ontologies invoked by those disciplines in their explanatory work. I then address the great challenges to contractarian liberalism, which arose in the nineteenth century and which have been redoubled by the global transformations

of our current era. I turn in conclusion to the obvious problem raised by the fact that much - perhaps most - of the world does not share this normative ontology. This divergence is not only a problem, however, but also an opportunity. And seizing this opportunity will inevitably turn us towards processual forms of social theory.

Let me begin with the premise that social science is in principle at least partially normative. We commonly base this assertion on empirical examinations of past social research, for it is easy to demonstrate normative positions in any example of social science. Social science is always written from - and therefore located in - some particular place in the social process, and inevitably takes the normative color of that place.

But in fact the normativity of social science has sources both more general and more profound. Since the social process consists of human activity and human activity always entails the pursuit of values, the entirety of the social process - from demography to culture, from individual to society - is itself a process of values. Some of these values have congealed into completely taken-for-granted social structures, like the class of *fonctionnaires* or the Roman Catholic Church or the legal category of juvenile delinquency. Others of these values are openly recognized as current values, in the sense that there are obvious current alternatives to them. But even the most congealed of social structures were originally made by choices of values, and even the most congealed of social structures are subject to value change in the present. Thus even when we study these fully reified social values, we must inevitably invoke our own values to some extent. Despite Max Weber's assertion to the contrary, a purely scientific social science - a social science without values - is not only impossible, but also a logical absurdity.

Thus, the social sciences are ineluctably normative. But what can we say of the content of this normativity? One might imagine that our social sciences must necessarily cover the normative waterfront, because they are so obviously diverse; surely they must contain versions of all the possible values the world can present. After all, the various social sciences display a bewildering variety of ontologies of the social world. Economics and related fields are bastions of ontological individualism: only individuals exist, all social phenomena are mere appearance, and individual choice determines all. By contrast, Durkheim and his sociological descendants follow a social emergentism where large social structures pervade these very individuals, setting averages around which individual choices provide merely minor variation. And Marxism and related historical determinisms take a third route, seeing a world of long, enduring social forces that shape everything in their path, individual and social alike.

But when we look past this superficial diversity of empirical ontologies and ask ourselves what are the normative ontologies that support the judgments that come out of these various disciplines, we are surprised to hear the same normative vocabulary from all of them: words like inequality, domination, opportunity, fairness, inclusion, and so on. Underneath the extraordinary surface differences in their empirical ontologies of the social world, these disciplines seem to share a single normative imagination against which empirical reality is judged as good or bad. And that imagination, it seems to me, arises directly from the normative world of contractarian liberalism, which underwrote the very projects of nationalism and imperialism beside and through which these

diverse social sciences emerged in the first place. Indeed, this contractarian heritage shapes the social sciences no matter what the substantive politics involved. The projects of counting people and counting types of people, for example, provided knowledge for projects of surveillance as well as for projects of inclusion. Similarly, the attempt to envision "grand social forces" could be part of reifying the solidarity of nations, as we see in Durkheim, or part of overthrowing it, as we see in Marx. It is not any particular brand of politics that characterizes the normative framework of social science in the Western metropolis, but rather what we might call an underlying normative ontology of the social: first, a conception of the beings and entities of which values can be predicated and second, a conception of what is at stake in the relations of those entities and beings to one another: public and private, inclusion and exclusion, and so on. So let me turn to the examination of the shared normative ontology of contractarian liberalism.

The contractarian ontology divided the world into nations or, to use Durkheim's word - "societies." A nation or society was a unit of political equals implicitly linked by a social contract. Public life was a realm of absolute equality in both rights and responsibilities. Public (or "political") individuals were thus equivalent and almost contentless. But beside this public life was a private realm, which was by contrast a realm of substantive differences between persons. For the contractarians, the most common of these differences were in age, property, skill, resources, and religion, although later thinkers would add things like gender and race. The contractarians realized that these various differences might affect public life and sometimes specified limits on them; Rousseau insisted for example that no individual should be so wealthy as to be able to buy or sell another. But within itself, this private world was expected to be governed by laws established by a legislature, usually on the basis of a written constitution of some kind.

It is obvious from the contractarian texts that the main substantive differences among humans that concerned them were differences in property. And they all assumed a legal protection of property, in the sense that the public law accepted by all would include a concept of ownership and a body of law related to ownership. Property was thus taken to be part of the "universal" and public side of society, as was also a short negative list of things to be universally regarded as disorderly - the various crimes against person and property. Thus, the third piece of the contractarian model - after the two pairings of nation and citizen, and public and private, - was the list of particularities that were protected or forbidden by the publicly shared rule of equal citizens. These were things de facto treated as universals by the legal system of the private realm or actually enacted into the core legal universals of the public side of the system.

The normative ontology of contractarian liberalism did not include intermediate institutions between individual and society. Even the family was for most contractarians not an important part of liberal society, but only a sort of primitive model or microcosm of that society. As for the other intermediate institutions, there was open hostility to them. It was after all the point of the French Revolution to destroy such things, and the authors of the Federalist Papers condemned any association among political actors as "faction." In theory, for the contractarians, all intermediate institutions were taken to be private matters, only to be disturbed if they interfered with the apparatus of the state. In practice, of course, the actual societies legitimated by contractarianism inevitably

retained many such intermediate structures from the past (family, church, companies, and associations, for example), all of which had immense political consequences.

Thus the core normative ontology of liberalism comprised four things: first, a unified nation of equal individual citizens; second, separation of public and private, with the latter governed by publicly legitimated legislative decisions; third, establishment of a common set of forbidden or protected particularities; and fourth absence of a theory of intermediate institutions or indeed of internal solidarities of any kind. These four things have remained the foundation of the normative standard used for social life by the social sciences. A good society fits this model, a bad one does not.

In the nineteenth century, this standard faced - as it still faces - three fundamental challenges. These concerned particularity, history, and difference. They would become all the more problematic once comprehensive globalization arrived in the late twentieth century.

First, the challenge of particularism. Contractarian liberalism envisions a society of universal beings without particular qualities, living on the one hand in a public and equal world of politics and on the other in a private, unequal, and deliberately unknown world of social differences, whose implications are sometimes to be remedied when they become so great as to compromise citizen equality in the public realm. The normative status of this private social particularity is just as obscure in today's social science as it was in the original contractarians. Such particularity disappears under general terms like "inequality" or "exclusion," vague terms that can refer to anything from the topmost glass ceiling in elite business to the horrors of everyday life in American ghettos. The theoretical strength of the first two pillars of contractarianism as a normative ontology - society and individual, and public and private - is thus defended by the chaos of the third - the list of protections and forbiddings. This list is a kind of junk room of the contractarians, housing all the issues that cannot be accommodated by the first two concepts of society/citizen and public/private. Indeed the empirical political history of the great liberal states is mainly about getting things and people on and off this list. Property was the first such protected phenomenon, followed by a long list of categories of people (women, children, laborers, etc), of types of organizations (universities, churches, hospitals, etc.), and of ascriptive or experiential social groups (races, ethnicities, migrants), all of whom eventually moved onto the list of private things protected by the state, most often under the guise of being "victims." Ironically, the same justification had been used by the Federalists to protect property-owners, who they thought might potentially be victims of the democratic mob.

Of course there has been much writing about such particularity within various polemical literatures; feminism, post-colonial studies, queer studies, and so on. But even these writings, I think, mainly follow the contractarian logic. They just want to rearrange the list of who is protected and by what. But the challenge that particularity presents to contractarianism is much greater than simply who is in which list. There are three reasons for this.

First, forms of particularity are bewilderingly diverse in character. They include some things that change regularly (age), other things that never change (biological sex); some things that are to varying extents chosen (occupation, residence), other things that are to varying extents unchosen (religion, parents); some things that are sharply defined (height), other things that are or can be relatively vague (race, ethnicity). We often speak of all these as forms of stratification. But the fact

that they may all occupy a common place in the normative ontology of contractarianism does not obscure the fact that they are wildly different kinds of phenomena.

Second, individuals and social groups inevitably partake not of one, but of many forms of particularity, with the consequence that the private social world consists of a bewildering overlapping mass of multiply connected social actors and groups. A woman is never just a woman, but also a thirty-five-year old, and a daughter, and a divorcee, and a lawyer, and an avocational alpinist, and a refugee. She is never one of those things alone, nor is any other social actor or group.

Third, most forms of particularity transcend the "national" boundaries that are so central to the contractarian concept of society. Women, the elderly, black people, workers: none of these groups is a purely national group. That is obvious, but we think about it only rarely. Yet we would be wise to recall that until the very last moment of mobilization in 1914, there was serious doubt whether the workers would actually be willing to fight in the capitalists' nationalistic war.

For all three reasons then - complexity, overlap, and internationality - thinking about particularity with a simple rhetoric of inclusion or inequality is foolish. Now, society itself, of course, believes that it deals quite well with all these private particularities and that it does so by the means provided in contractarian theory: legislation and law. But it is striking that not many social scientists regard law as the solution for the social problems of particularity. For quite different reasons, both left and right social scientists are more likely to see law as the cause than the solution of such problems. Social scientists borrow almost none of their normative repertoire from law, a surprising fact given that the western legal tradition has constituted one of world's great inquiries into the nature of human values.

So much for the first great challenge to the normative ontology of contractarianism: the challenge of particularity. The second great challenge is that of history. Not only are there complex particularities, most of these particularities are changing at varying rates in historical time. People change. Organizations change. Ethnicities change. Forms of employment change. These changes may be slow drifts or sudden breaks, but over the course of decades they often add up to considerable and very uneven transitions. Yet our normative approach remains without any recognition of history. Contractarianism imagines individuals, but they are contentless individuals without life courses or changes of occupation, of religion, or of family. Contractarianism imagines a private division of labor, but that division of labor does not have a kaleidoscopic history, much less does it leap into the current international format. And contractarianism has no theory of intermediate institutions at all, much less a normative theory of how to think about the complex histories of churches, ethnicities, and unions as they battle in dozens of arenas. Again, all these facts are familiar in our empirical writing, but they are largely absent from the normative apparatus with which we routinely judge the world. At the individual level, we still talk about inequality and inclusion, for example, as if they are once for all, ignoring the fact that one can be equal or included at one point in the life course but unequal and excluded at another. Or at the social level, we think about governmental aid to immigrants but forget that the immigrants of one decade are not those of another or that patterns of immigration may shift from permanent to temporary and back again.

Globalization makes it clear that this ahistoricism of our normative ontology continues to the international level. The present world does not consist of stable contractarian nations with citizens. Well over half the world's population experienced a complete change of sovereignty at some point in the twentieth century, and places like Russia and China experienced at least two such changes. As a result, modern humans typically begin life under one sovereignty and finish it under another. War, trade, migration, and empire, coupled with increasing ease of communication, transportation, and mobility, have further weakened national borders. The whole notion of nation/societies has come adrift historically, as is well known, so it seems strange indeed to employ contractarian images as the general standard for normative rights and wrongs around the world.

The usual answer to this claim is of course to say that contractarian states are an ideal and that it's simply a matter of time till they spread throughout the world: eventually, the world's "nations" will become the "real" nations that the contractarians envisioned. I cannot help reacting to this assertion the way I reacted thirty years ago to my reading of hundreds of studies of professionalization. The students of professionalization had argued that all expert occupations were on the road to full profession-hood, but some had not yet achieved it. But I myself found that the history of professions was littered with dead professions, regressive professions, degenerated professions, professions suddenly without work, or without organization - all the contingencies of a complex history. So will it be with nations. The idea of progress is no substitute for a general theory of history and contingency, and for a normative ontology based on frank recognition of those contingencies, including such things as the complete failure of nationhood as a phenomenon in a particular place.

This possibility brings me to the third and most considerable problem faced by a globalizing social science armed with the normative ontology of contractarian liberalism. Contractarian liberalism is clearly one of the great conceptual glories of western civilization. Although seldom realized in practice, it is a shining ideal worth all our attention and effort. It is indeed my own faith and I honor it. Yet the fact is that there are billions of people in the world who do not live in liberal contractarian societies, many of whom would find the shift to such a society catastrophic or even evil. Only the most naive of social scientists would expect these billions, when presented properly with "rational choices," to throw down their non-liberal worlds and leap at once into full participation in the liberal world of the modern West. I knew many such naively hopeful people in the heyday of modernization studies, when I was an undergraduate. The last fifty years have proved them wrong in countless ways. To be sure, the world has developed. To be sure, its economies have become ever more interlocked and "liberal" in the nineteenth century sense. But have these countries moved closer to contractarian liberalism? No. Rather, the mere forms of contractarian liberalism have been placed over societies and empires and civilizations that are fundamentally illiberal. For these billions of people I just mentioned are not just isolated individuals. They often have great and powerful states and strong religious leaders, and their histories - sometimes illiberal in the extreme - are as long or longer than those of the West. Most important, they don't necessarily see the world - even the liberal world - as an example of liberal theories, but often as something else entirely. They believe fundamentally different things about human nature and human behavior and human goals.

A global social science has to be willing to regard this rest of the world as not simply a residual leftover from metropolitan virtue. It has to recognize that these societies - in some cases, not societies, but whole civilizations - simply value different things than does the West, and that to thoughtlessly apply Western liberal beliefs to them is both imperialistic and foolish. The old social scientists of empire of course knew all this. They set universalism aside, for they knew at first hand the practical problems of governing the unfamiliar worlds of empires. To be sure, their writings can be read as trapped within the normative ontologies of the West, and indeed they have so been judged by the proponents of postcolonial studies. But those very postcolonial theorists, ironically enough, have based themselves largely on the same contractarian notions of nation, sovereignty, citizen, and domestic society as has the normative literature of mainstream social science. By contrast, the deep practical message of the social sciences of empire, ultimately, was that empire - in the sense of imposing the liberal polity concept on an established and extensive social group embracing many different kinds of peoples - was simply an impossibility. Sadly, this literature on the profound importance of cultural differences did not spawn a politics. Rather, the concept of cultural difference was in the period after 1950 domesticated into a limited extension of the same old normative ontology of liberalism.

In summary, the great heritage of contractarian liberalism undergirds the normative thinking of nearly all the social sciences, however diverse they may appear on the surface. This scheme dictates how most western social scientists judge social worlds - both their own and others' - whether they be neoclassical economists or sociologists or Marxists. They use the same generic vocabulary of "inequality" and "inclusion" to hide a thousand different kinds of particularities. They ignore the historical evolution of both individuals and of societies. They ignore the grand differences that lead billions of people in the world to think that contractarian liberalism is a simple ideology or even an unmitigated evil.

Because of these shortcomings, we now require a normative ontology that recognizes the historicity of human experience and in particular the fact that most humans alive can expect to face, in the course of their lives, major transitions in things like sovereignty, citizenship, ethnicity, and employment regimes. This normative ontology must also recognize that there are billions of people in the world who do not accept the normative theory of contractarian liberalism, but who may believe in a world peopled by particular rather than universal beings, or who may believe in some universal reality that seems to us like a very particular cultural system - typically a religion. And yet at the same time, we want any new normative ontology to preserve the admitted strengths of contractarianism: its combination of uniformity and tolerance, its capacity to embrace difference, its ability to focus attention on universal goods like personal safety. It should therefore be clear that I am urging a complexification of the normative ontology of contractarianism but not by any means its complete replacement.

The great difficulty of this task becomes clear when one reads the social thought of the non-metropolitan world. As a personal discipline, I have in the last six years undertaken such an exercise, in the guise of an imaginary professor at an imaginary university. My reading and writing have taken me to South America and authors like Domingo Sarmiento, Heleith Saffioti, Jose Vasconcelos, and

the Ecole's own Alberto Flores Galindo; to Africa and writers like Edward Blyden, Sol Plaatje, Jomo Kenyatta, and Leopold Sedar Senghor; to the world of Islam and writers like Mariama Ba, Taha Hussein, Ali Shariati, Ziya Gokalp, and Deliar Noer; to Indian writers like Pandita Ramabai and Radakhamal Mukerjee, Chinese like Chen Da and Fei Xiaotong, Japanese like Fukuzawa Yukichi and Fukutake Tadashi. Most of these are not familiar names. Indeed, that is precisely why I recite them. For they are eminent men and women, who wrote analyses of their societies in various forms, from various points of view, with widely differing attitudes to the metropolis. And the fact is that many of them have views of society that are outside the simple normative ontology of classical liberalism. Some are pacifists. Others are secret or occasionally open admirers of violence. Some approve imperialism, some detest it. In the liberal metropolis, some would be considered totalitarians of various stripes: thought-reformed communists or partisans of religious states. Others are classical liberals of a Western sort. Some see religion as a private matter or a poisonous danger, others as the central focus in society. Some admire racial purity, others admire racial mixture. Although such diversity has characterized the West at times in the past, the recent social science literature is pretty univocal on such matters and defines many of these views to be beyond the pale of debate.

But these writers speak for a world that is not consensually agreed upon the normative liberalism that the western metropolis wishes to impose and that western social science takes for granted. Some of them reject it specifically, most often in the name of something that appears to the average westerner like some local particularity. And yet these are, most of them, intellectuals of the very first rank, whose work already has or soon will take its place in a world canon of social thought. Most of them spoke five or more languages. Many of them studied and even triumphed in the best schools of the imperial nations. Many of them played crucial political roles in their home societies, even while many of them also endured exile, jail, and in one case assassination. They think big ideas and in those big ideas the metropolis and its liberal norms are only one possible set of ideals for the world. Their notion of history is not of a grand process culminating in liberal democracy. Their notion of a just society is not necessarily the Deweyan freedom for all to contribute according to their skills and for all to receive according to their individual needs and desires. Many of them believe in a religion or a social system that has its own rules about particularities, about social hierarchies, about justice. And they generally speak for large and important groups in their societies, which include most of the largest societies of the world.

A normative ontology that would make sense to such a diversity of writers seems to me to demand several things. First, it must fill the gap between individual and society with formally theorized intermediate structures. This doesn't mean that it will set proper designs for associations or churches or whatever, like a huge planning operation. Nor that it will simply select some new institution to fill the vacancy left by church and family, as we saw in Durkheim's wistful plea for occupational associations, a plea quickly made irrelevant by the incessant - and by Durkheim untheorized - historical change inherent in modern societies. Rather, theorizing intermediate structures means that such an ontology would write a "Leviathan" or a "Social Contract" for each of the various kinds of internal difference: changeable versus unchangeable, exclusive versus overlapping, chosen versus unchosen, versus definite. Even within the old conception of domestic

versus international, we need to develop a serious normative theory of particularities in society and of how to conceive of the individual as an intersection of joint particularities, rather than a contentless being. Moreover, if there is to be a normative conception of world social order, it will have to build something other than a sharply demarcated, contractual "nation" on top of this welter of intermediate institutions. Indeed, it may mainly be a theory of how to prevent any particular intermediate structure - including nations - from dominating the rest. So a new normative ontology must, first, embody a genuine theory of particularity.

Second, this mass of intermediate structures and the mass of individuals whose lives meld them together must have a history. Like the particularity problem, this is as much a problem for traditional domestic thinking about injustice as it is about international injustice. There must be a normative conception of how histories ought to transpire, both for individuals and for groups. This means thinking about who should have which outcomes, and when in life. And it is clear that those conceptions must always be transtemporal, in the sense that they will have to set standards about how change is to occur, not about what are going to be the final results of changes. Because a serious theory of the social process must face the fact that there is no final result, no end. The social process simply goes on.

I do not mean by this that there can be no absolutes in such an ethics, but rather that the absolutes must be about how transitions occur, not about particular results and ends. It is as if we need to theorize a set of rules for having changes that will produce an ideal process for humanity over all. We can certainly set some substantive ideals for that process - that it never conduct mass exterminations and so on - but we must principally think about ideal overall patterns rather than about ideal particular content. Perhaps the social process should preserve many truly different types of societies. Perhaps it should enable individuals to experience many histories. Perhaps it should teach us how to change wisely and well.

Obviously it therefore becomes clear that a normative ontology that can deal with the problems that confront us must be processual. If we cannot be clear about the ultimate goals of the social process and yet we wish somehow to optimize it, then our only viable strategy is to create normative transition rules for social change in the present that have the long-run property of guiding the process's long-term wanderings in ways that we think normatively good. In the past, we have generally considered only two such transition rules. One of these is the idea of progress, which essentially takes the prospective form of each generation trying to project its desires on all the futures that follow it, and the retrospective form of deciding post hoc that whatever has happened was for some reason progressive. The other is the Khaldunian and Herderian concept of cyclicality, of a life cycle for groups and societies as well as for individuals. Yet we clearly could conceive of other general trajectories for the societies of the world, and we should do so. For it is plain that a world all of which resembles the particular paradise envisioned by consumer capitalism is a meaningless affair.

In short, the social sciences need a vastly increased investment in normative theory and that normative theory must necessarily be predominantly processual, because it must get us beyond the ahistoric simplicities of our current normative ontology.

It is both useful and appropriate to close this analysis with the example of Marc Bloch. Liberal governance is a great and wonderful heritage. But Marc Bloch perished because a society theoretically built on contractarian grounds and following legitimate legal procedures voted itself out of existence on 23 March 1933. All empirical accounts of that event invoke the complex particularities and historicities of European society. Yet our basic normative ontology in the social sciences is not really equipped to deal with those complexities. As far as contractarianism is concerned, that Reichstag vote simply brought a particular social contract to an end, returning us to the world of Chapter Thirteen of Hobbes's Leviathan. But we knew that already. What we need is a normative social ontology that can enable us to imagine a normatively governed social process that can understand and govern constant change and fundamental value difference, but that will not wander down that road again.