# Culture, citizenship and the masses: Raymond Williams and the New York intellectuals

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Abstract

The rise of the New Left in 1950s Britain is seen to be a separate development to the emergence of the New Left in the USA. Denning noted that "American studies and British cultural studies seem parallel responses to the world of post-war mass communications and 'consumerism' and the emergence of a new left". This article explores that view by looking at  Williams's engagement with some of the key "New York Intellectuals", focusing on questions of mass culture and national citizenship. In exploring the key themes by Howe and Kazin in their reviews of *Culture and Society*, and in tracing correspondences and divergences in the thought of Williams and Arendt, the article opens up new avenues for research in the history of the transatlantic Left.

**Keywords:** *Culture and Masses; Mass-culture; Nation-state; British New Left; New York Intellectuals.*

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## Introduction

We are meeting at a moment when populist forms of nationalism and brutal xenophobia threaten the liberal order, when democracy seems to be on the defensive everywhere (and social democracy even more so), when immigrants and minorities are at risk, where neo-liberal economics is dominant and where in much of the West if not wider afield, the working class are pinched more severely than any time since the Second World War[2]. What can the work of Raymond Williams tell us about this moment? Much of my work on Williams has been an attempt at addressing the significance of his Welsh background and identity to his life and thought[3]. Tony Pinkney noted that as Williams became more aware of his Welshness in his later writings, he also became more internationalist, defining himself in *Politics and Letters* as a "Welsh European" (PINKNEY, 1991, p. 12, WILLIAMS R, 1979, p. 296). If the Welsh and European dimensions of Williams's thought are increasingly being recognized, Michael Denning reflects a widespread view in arguing that cultural critics in the United States paid little attention to Williams and that as a result "American studies and British cultural studies seem parallel responses to the world of post-war mass communications and 'consumerism' and the emergence of a new left"[4]. I am going to question that view in this paper. Williams did have significant contact with that generation of critics known as the "New York Intellectuals" and I hope to convince you that the nature and substance of their dialogues and debates are of some significance for contemporary debates in Brazil and beyond today.

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3 See, in particular, Williams DG (2015, p. 93-111) and Williams R (2003).
4 On Williams and European thought see Denning (2018) and Gerke (2019).

*Culture and the Masses*

I begin with Hannah Arendt's volume of 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The book sold out on Amazon in January 2017, a response, we may assume, to the inauguration of Donald Trump as President of the United States (WILLIAMS Z., 2017). Totalitarianism, argued Arendt, relied on the creation of "one great unorganised structureless mass of individuals":

> The truth is that the masses grew out of the fragments of a highly atomized society whose competitive structure and concomitant loneliness of the individual had been held in check only through membership in a class. The chief characteristic of the mass man is not brutality and backwardness, but his isolation and lack of normal social relationships… The language of prophetic scientificity corresponded to the needs of masses who had lost their home in the world and now were prepared to be reintegrated into eternal, all-dominating forces which by themselves would bear man, the swimmer on the waves of adversity, to the shores of safety… Totalitarian propaganda perfects the techniques of mass propaganda, but it neither invents them nor originates their themes. These were prepared for them by fifty years of the rise of imperialism and the disintegration of the nation-state […]. (ARENDT, 2017, p. 415)

The mass, then, is formed through the disintegration of prior alliances and allegiances: class, empire and nation. This disintegration of the bases of society, community and the individual became the central theme of Arendt's later collection of essays, *Beyond Past and Future* (1961).

In the Autumn of 1961 Raymond Williams reviewed *Between Past and Future* in the respected American journal *The Kenyon Review*. He pays "a more than ordinary tribute" to Arendt's book concerned as it is with "the breakdown

of tradition in our time, and the consequent effects of the loss of this natural bridge between past and future" (WILLIAMS R, 1961b, p. 698). Arendt's writing stimulates a slightly uncharacteristic metaphoric response from Williams. He compares her form of argumentation with a dance in which "virtually everyone on the floor is brilliantly and learnedly announced before the patterned movements begin". But every now and then a "masked stranger" appears to disturb the carefully patterned argument. In *Between Past and Future*, that "masked stranger", argues Williams, is the concept of "mass society". Williams proceeds to quote two passages from Arendt's volume. "Mass society" first appears here:

> In the situation of radical world-alienation, neither history nor nature is at all conceivable. This twofold loss of the world – the loss of nature and the loss of human artifice in the widest sense, which would include all history – has left behind it a society of men who, without a common world which would at once relate and separate them, either live in desperate lonely separation or are pressed together into a mass. For a mass-society is nothing more than that kind of organized living which automatically establishes itself among human beings who are still related to one another but have lost the world once common to all of them. (ARENDT, 1961 apud WILLIAMS R, 1961b, p. 699)

Mass-society appears later in Arendt's volume wearing a slightly different "mask":

> [M]ass-society clearly comes about when "the mass of the population has become incorporated into society" (Edward Shils). And since society in the sense of "good society" comprehended those parts of the population which disposed not only of wealth, but of leisure time, that is, of time to be devoted to "culture", mass society

> does indeed indicate a new state of affairs in which the mass of the population has been so far liberated from the burden of physically exhausting labor that it too disposes of enough leisure for "culture". (ARENDT, 1961 apud WILLIAMS R, 1961b, p. 699)

Williams responds to these passages as follows, drawing attention in particular to the different approach to these issues in Britain:

> We have only to give these two areas different names (yet names which are still quite accurate for the generality of process described) to be faced with quite different emotional connections. Thus, the first process which creates mass-society is the loss of a religious or quasi-religious world view, with the implication that this loss creates an inevitable alienation from the world. The second process is the growth of democracy, which indeed has a different coloring from the idea of the "incorporation of the mass" (which is a kind of voluntary digestion) but which nevertheless is an open historical fact...

> When we are told that we will not look at the facts of a mass society, and at its inevitable consequences in mass culture, we are not forgiven for replying that it seems to us that many Americans will not look at capitalism with any sense that it is transient and replaceable. We can all acknowledge the pressures of a particular society, but it seems to some of us that many brilliant American thinkers are in effect hypnotized by certain concepts which seem to us to be rationalizations of tensions in the society which cannot easily be openly named. The central argument, always, is about this concept of "mass society", which seems now so built in, that arguments begin from it rather than passing through it. The crucial dialogue as I see it will begin from this point, but it cannot begin while the processes of American society are held, consciously or unconsciously, to be universal processes. (WILLIAMS R, 1961b, p. 700)

The "we" here, are intellectuals in Britain. Williams was always attuned to the ways in which dominant cultures could pass off their own particularities as universals. (I would argue, indeed, that this is one of the areas where his membership of the Welsh minority in the British state plays a decisive role in his work). It is of course no surprise that Williams should have responded in this critical way, for one of the key and most influential arguments of his career-making volume *Culture and Society* in 1958 was that

> There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing other people as masses. In an urban industrial society there are many opportunities for such ways of seeing. The point is not to reiterate the objective conditions but to consider, personally and collectively, what these have done to our thinking. (WILLIAMS R, 1982, p. 300)

"There are [...] no masses". Whether we agree with this statement or not, it remains a significant statement as the Left tries to make sense of Brexit in Britain, Trump in the US, and Bolsonaro in Brazil[5].

There is no indication that Arendt had read *Culture and Society*, but she did write to thank Raymond Williams for his review. Writing to Cambridge, England from New York, she noted,

> How re-assuring to see that one has spotted my illegitimate use of "mass society" – "without pedigree and with only the briefest of introductions". I have done it before, each time with a bad conscience, but nobody ever caught me. The reason why I did it is simple. Obviously, the word indicates a very real phenomenon, and my trouble is that I don't quite understand it and therefore cannot fit it into my patterns. I don't know what to do with it although I can see some of it all around me. (ARENDT, 1962)

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5 See, for example, Sparrow (2016).

Arendt had indeed "done it before", because as my first quotation suggested, some of the central arguments in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* depend on the deployment and existence of "the masses".

Her use of, and interest in, "the masses" connects Arendt with a generation of thinkers known as the New York Intellectuals, clustered around the journal *Partisan Review*. They were defined by a rejection of Stalinism and an attempt, at least in the 30s and 40s to develop libertarian and democratic forms of socialism. They espoused modernism in the arts and chose essays, reviews and polemics as their preferred means of cultural intervention. Many were the children of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe but tended to under-state their cultural particularity in the name of socialist or liberal universal humanism (WALD, 1987). In relation to my discussion of this conceptualisation of "the masses" there are two reviews of *Culture and Society* by New York intellectuals that merit particular attention.

The first is by the critic Irving Howe, who also corresponded with Williams in the early 60s, even inviting him to teach at Brandeis University for a year. Howe, born Irving Horenstein in 1920, was the son of immigrants who ran a grocery store that went out of business in the Great Depression. A sharp polemicist, Howe brought an element of socialist discourse into American literary and academic circles during the Cold War, testifying, argues Alan Wald, to his considerable intellectual resources and strengths of character (WALD, 1987, p. 321). In a review of *Culture and Society* that appeared in *The New Republic* in 1959, Howe argued that Williams had failed to acknowledge "the full thrusting power of the authoritarian ethos", and as a result his turn to working class communities as an alternative source of values to capitalist individualism was unconvincing. Howe detected

> a sentimental exaggeration of the survival value of the British working class style of life. My guess is that the warm feeling held for it by writers like Mr Williams and

> other British intellectuals is not merely an authentic appreciation but also a token of desperation, a sign of their uneasiness at entering mass society. (HOWE, 1959, p. 19)

Howe's fellow New York intellectual, Alfred Kazin, made a similar point:

> [Culture and Society] has one obvious limitation for an American reader. Mr Williams, as he himself explains, comes from the working class, went to Cambridge on scholarships, and in his personal circumstances and general outlook is entirely typical of the first generation of British intellectuals who have been educated at the expense of the state, have never felt themselves to be part of the Establishment or even of normal commercial middle-class society, and who have a profound and almost mystical attachment to the working class as a community. This feeling for community, for tradition, for local usages and settled habits [...] counts for much more in the ranks of British Socialism than does Marxist class antagonism. (KAZIN, 1959, p. 43)

Less politically engaged that Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin is a similar figure, born in 1915 to poor Jewish immigrant family in New York. He was fascinated by American literature which distinguished him from the more Eurocentric *Partisan Review* group, and his 1941 study of American prose literature *On Native Grounds* remains a seminal text. Kazin could see the legitimacy of Williams's rejection of the idea of the mass culture, noting in sympathy with Williams's argument that

> if the term "mass culture" means anything, it means the ever-widening social opportunity without which so many American intellectuals would have remained in the "masses". [...] Mr Williams's work is important, often brilliant, and a healthy change from the tiresome fear of our expanding society that is now so common among intellectuals. (KAZIN, 1959, p. 43)

It is worth recalling in this connection that Kazin and Howe were, along with Lionel Trilling, among the first generation to break, in the words of Cornel West, into "the anti-Semitic and patriarchal critical discourse of the exclusivistic institutions of American culture" thus initiating "the slow but sure undoing of the male WASP cultural hegemony and homogeneity" (WEST, 1993, p. 11). Kazin summarised Raymond Williams's argument in *Culture and Society* as follows: "What interests Mr. Williams is a national culture in which all classes can share. He does not want to revolutionize society but to see that the 'masses' enter more and more into the common culture" (KAZIN, 1959, p. 43).

While Kazin agreed with this argument, he concluded by noting that

> It is easy enough for an Englishman to identify his society with its traditional values – ultimately to be shared by all classes. But an American, who has made his nation rather than inherited it, is less likely to identify all value with his own society. (KAZIN, 1959, p. 44)

Irving Howe summarized Williams's argument rather differently, but like Kazin was not convinced of the argument's relevance to the United States.

> He ends his book with a plea for a "common culture" resting upon a democratic socialist community in which the manipulativeness and vulgarity of our present "mass culture" would be eradicated and the excellence of traditional "minority culture" would become a common property. I share with him the feeling that, for the moment at least, "minority culture" seems to have reached a point of exhaustion and that the political-cultural perspective he outlines is the only humane solution to the problems of the 20th century. But I do not share his optimism and his apparent readiness to dismiss, in the name of what we desire but do not yet have, that which we do have and cling to. It seems to

> me that he takes much too cavalier an attitude toward
> "minority culture" – for remember, so far we have
> nothing else – and that he fails to appreciate the exact
> nature of the difficulties which must now be faced
> by those who desire a democratic "common culture".
> (HOWE, 1959, p. 19)

Howe does clearly not mean "minority culture" in the ethnic sense; he does not mean Welsh speakers in the UK, say, or Yiddish speakers in the USA. "Minority culture" here designates the "high modernist" definition of culture as the preserve and responsibility of an elite, a position often associated with T. S. Eliot (ELIOT, 1948)[6]. In Howe's reading Raymond Williams is arguing that "the excellence of traditional 'minority culture' would become a common property". That is, "minority culture" would break out of its confinement in the hands of an elite and become the common property of all citizens within a democratic society. Alfred Kazin's reading is different, believing that Williams wants to see "the 'masses' enter more and more into the common culture".

Howe's conception seems close to liberal paternalism; a position shared by Victorian "men of letters" such as Matthew Arnold, whereby a democratic society relies on the widest dissemination of "the best that has been thought and said in the world" (ARNOLD, 1965, p. 233)[7]. Kazin's reading is, to my mind, much closer to what Williams is actually saying. It entails a re-definition of "culture" itself through the participation of constituencies that have, so far, been excluded from the realm of the "cultural". But Kazin's image of the masses "entering" the common culture seems wrong too – not least as Williams had said fairly explicitly that "there are no masses". Williams's actual position was summarised in his essay *Culture is Ordinary* (1958), a synopsis of the central arguments of *Culture and Society*:

> We should not seek to extend a ready-made culture to
> the benighted masses. We should accept, frankly, that

6 On Eliot and Williams see Davies (2018).
7 See Williams DG (2006).

> if we extend our culture we shall change it: some that
> is offered will be rejected, other parts will be radically
> criticized. And this is as it should be, for our arts, now,
> are in no condition to go down to eternity unchallenged.
> (WILLIAMS R, 1989, p. 16)

Growth, the expansion of culture, involved something more than Accessed to high culture, or a paternalistic invite to join the high-culture-club. For Williams, working class life harbored notions of inter-dependence, communalism and fraternity that challenged bourgeois individualism and aristocratic selfishness. Williams's vision, then, is not of a pre-defined conception of culture being trickled down from above (to use a common economic metaphor), nor is it the entry of excluded groups into what W. E. B. Du Bois described as "the kingdom of culture" (DU BOIS, 1986, p. 365). For Williams, the key verbs are "to grow" and "to expand", a common endeavour of cultural participation and re-definition.

The humanist and gradualist implications of Raymond Williams's social prognosis, where the creation of a common culture would lead to the property and power relations of capitalism being dissolved in a process of mutual growth, has been widely critiqued. But the originality of Williams's thought in the 1950s is reflected in the fact that both Kazin and Howe, in summarising their positions, are still caught in the "culture" and "society" tradition that Williams was trying to break out of.  Kazin was wrong, for Williams did wish to revolutionise society, but his was not by means of a sudden charge of the barricades, but through the long revolution entailed by democratic and social expansion. What he identified as the long revolution, notes Stefan Collini, "was a record of actual growth, of a liberation of human potential rather than a dilution of standards" (COLLINI, 2016, p. 122). "Everything that I understand of the history of the long revolution" stated Raymond Williams "leads me to the belief that we are still in its early stages"[8]. It was, as Collini notes, important

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[8] Apud Smith (2008, p. 473), from an unpublished conclusion to Williams's *The Long Revolution* (1961a).

to say that in the Britain of 1958. It is still an important thing to say in 2019, especially perhaps in a nation of the Global South such as Brazil where we can give the statement an internationalist application (COLLINI, 2016, p. 122).

Williams did not respond directly to these reviews, as far as I know. But following the preceding discussion, I hope that we can now read his review of Hannah Arendt's *Beyond Past and Future*, with which I began, as a defense of his argument regarding the masses.

## Culture and Citizenship

If Williams's debate with the New York intellectuals on the question of the "masses" relates to his definition of "culture", and – as I hope to have suggested – allows us to appreciate the distinctiveness of his position in *Culture and Society*, the question of "the masses" also relates to the idea of citizenship. The ultimate aim of totalitarianism, noted Arendt, was to make human beings superfluous.

> What totalitarian ideologies therefore aim at is not the transformation of the outside world or the revolutionizing transmutation of society, but the transformation of human nature itself [...] [R]adical evil has emerged in connection with a system in which all men have become equally superfluous. (ARENDT, 2017, p. 601-602)

The superfluous man, for Arendt, loses his political status. This is the point at which the inborn and inalienable rights of man should come into play, but it seemed that a man who is nothing but a man loses the very qualities which make it possible for him to be treated as a fellow man by others.

In her remarkable chapter on *The Decline of the Nation-state and the End of the Rights of Man*, Arendt made a distinction between universal, pre-political, human rights possessed by every human being "as such", and the specific

political rights that one may acquire from being a political citizen of a particular nation. Born into a secular Jewish family in Hanover in 1906, Arendt witnessed the rise of Nazism, was stripped of her German citizenship in 1937 and, having been briefly imprisoned by the Gestapo, fled Germany to Czechoslovakia and Switzerland before settling for a period in Paris. When Germany invaded France in 1940 she was detained by the French as an alien. In 1941 she escaped and made her way, via Portugal, to the United States where she remained for the rest of her life (BERNSTEIN, 2018, p. 1-8). Arendt had therefore found herself denied of human rights in 1940 at the very moment when, stripped of her German citizenship, she was reduced to being human "in general" and thus in most need of the protection of those "universal human rights" which belong to individuals independently of citizenship. But, deprived of the particular socio-political identity that accounted for citizenship, the Jews of 1940s Europe found that they were no longer recognised as human at all. "The world" noted Arendt in a chilling sentence "found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human" (ARENDT, 2017, p. 392).

For Arendt, the loss of citizenship is the loss of "the right to have rights" resulting in a "political death". Those in this condition, as Nancy Fraser notes in a discussion of Arendt, "may become objects of charity or benevolence", but they have no "first-order" claims as citizens, "they become non-citizens with respect to justice" (FRASER, 2005, p. 77)[9]. The conclusion that Arendt comes to is that universal "human rights" can only find expression within particular forms of national citizenship. There is no usable concept of human nature that can be Accesseded independently from particular communities. "The concept of human rights" she states "can again be meaningful only if they are redefined to mean a right to the human condition itself, which depends upon belonging to some human community" (ARENDT, 1951, p. 439)[10].

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9 "Political death" is Fraser's term.
10 From the first edition, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (ARENDT, 1951). This passage was deleted from later editions.

Arendt's focus is on the polity, the state; the structures that secure, from above, that individuals have the right to have rights. For Raymond Williams, on the other hand it was

> a serious misunderstanding ... to suppose that the problems of social identity are resolved by formal definitions. [...] To reduce social identity to formal legal definitions, at the level of the state, is to collude in the alienated superficialities of "the nation" which are the limited functional terms of the modern ruling class. (WILLIAMS R, 1983, p. 195)

Throughout the chapter on *The Culture of Nations* in his book *Towards 2000* (1983) the "artificial" political structure of the nation-state is contrasted with an alternative form of identity variously designated as "deeply grounded", "settled", "real" and "residual". The tendency to espouse the legal forms of national citizenship is seen to derive from a "mobile" and "detached" intellectual class. Francis Mulhern found that Williams's distinction between "natural communities" and the "artificial order" of the nation-state "disturbed" the "balance of his analysis of racism in Britain", and it was this dimension of *Towards 2000* that led the Black British critic Paul Gilroy to argue that Williams's conception of national belonging was essentialist and hard to differentiate from the overt racism of Enoch Powell (GILROY, 1987, p. 49-50; MULHERN, 1998, p. 112). The African American critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. noted that about twenty-five years or so after the publication of *Culture and Society*,

> People began to scrutinise Williams's reliance on the notion of a "common culture", on the historical rootedness of the English working man, on the valorization of "lived identities formed through long experience and actual sustained social relations" [...]. Writing in 1983, for example, Williams advanced a seemingly organicist conception of culture based on ethno-territorial continuity: "The real history of the peoples of these islands...goes back...to the remarkable

> society of the Neolithic shepherds and farmers, and back beyond them to the hunting peoples who did not simply disappear but are also amongst our ancestors".
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> But if this is the "real history", it follows that some of us – those not numbered among the possessive collectivity "our ancestors" – must not be Britain's "real people". The passage reprises the Anglo-Saxonist myths of lineage that serve to buttress an exclusionary and imperialist ideology of "Englishness". (Remember, this is a country where in the 1950s Winston Churchill could suggest to Harold Macmillan that if the Conservative Party wanted to win elections, it should adopt the slogan "Keep England White"). (GATES Jr., 2010, p. 39-40)

In its own terms there's little to disagree with here. Williams himself began to question his early commitment to a "common culture" and it would seem that phrases such as "real" history do indeed suggest an ethno-territorial conception of identity. But as a statement on Williams's position, the analysis is actually profoundly misleading. This is the passage from Raymond Williams's *Towards 2000* from which Gates has selected his quotations:

> What is most intolerable and unreal in existing projections of "England" or "Britain" is their historical and cultural ignorance. "The Yookay", of course, is neither historical nor cultural; it is a jargon term of commercial and military planning. I remember a leader of the Labour Party, opposing British entry to the European Community, asserting that it would be the end of "a thousand years of history". Why a thousand, I wondered. The only meaningful date by that reckoning would be somewhere around 1066, when a Norman-French replaced a Norse-Saxon monarchy. What then of the English? That would be some fifteen hundred years. The British? Some two thousand five hundred. But the real history of the peoples of these islands goes back very much further than that: at least six thousand years to

> the remarkable societies of the Neolithic shepherds and farmers, and back beyond them to the hunting peoples who did not simply disappear but are also among our ancestors. Thus the leader of a nominally popular party could not in practice think about the realities of his own people. He could not think about their history except in the alienated forms of a centralised nation-state. And that he deployed these petty projections as a self-evident argument against attempts at a wider European identity would be incomprehensible, in all its actual and approved former-European reorganisations, if the cultural and historical realities had not been so systematically repressed by a functional and domineering selective "patriotism".

> All the varied peoples who have lived on this island are in a substantial physical sense still here. What is from time to time projected as an "island race" is in reality a long process of successive conquests and repressions but also of successive supersessions and relative integrations. (WILLIAMS R, 1983, p. 193-194)

I think that it is fairly clear that this passage in no way "reprises the Anglo-Saxon myths" of lineage. To the contrary, the whole point of the argument regarding the real and plural history of the British Isles, the endless sequence of conquests, repressions and relative integrations, is to undermine, deconstruct and to reject the myths on which the contemporary evocations of Englishness and Britishness are based. Williams is not reinforcing dominant and exclusionary definitions of Englishness, but attacking them.

Williams reinforces this insight towards the end of the chapter where he typically relates the preceding discussion to Welsh history and his own Welsh experience.

> It happens that I grew up in an old frontier area, the Welsh border country, where for centuries there

> was bitter fighting and raiding and repression and discrimination, and where, within twenty miles of where I was born, there were in those turbulent centuries as many as four different everyday spoken languages.  It is with this history in mind that I believe in the practical formation of social identity – it is now very marked there – and know that necessarily it has to be lived.  Not far away there are the Welsh mining valleys, into which in the nineteenth century there was massive and diverse immigration, but in which, after two generations, there were some of the most remarkably solid and mutually loyal communities of which we have record.  These are the real grounds of hope. (WILLIAMS R, 1983, p. 196)

Far from denying that immigrants can share a significant social identity with the settled population, Williams actually turns to the diversity of the Welsh experience as "the real ground of hope".  For Williams, no political structure can satisfactorily precede, nor be decoupled from, a particular cultural community. To embrace citizenship is not to move beyond culture. No usable concept of citizenship can be accessed independently from particular communities.

## Conclusion: Burke

My discussion of Hannah Arendt's "right to have rights" ended with the assertion that there is no usable concept of human nature that can be accessed independently from particular communities. Similarly, I ended my discussion of Raymond Williams by claiming that no usable concept of citizenship can be accessed independently from particular cultures and communities.

I seem to have ended up in the same place, despite the fact that Arendt's focus is on the state and political structures, while Williams's focus is on

culture. Their disagreement regarding the masses comes down to a difference in perspective, a difference that is also manifest in their discussions of the national question. Arendt looks from above. Her primary concern is the state. Williams looks from below. His primary concern is culture. Yet they both ultimately suggest that a tolerant world is one of many citizens and citizenships and that dreams of universalist global orders have tended to underpin totalitarian regimes. Interestingly, one of the reasons why they end up in the same place is that they start from the same place.

The celebrated section on the *Rights to have Rights* in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* begins with a discussion of the Irish critic of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke. Burke is often seen as a foundational figure for conservative thought in Britain. Yet there is also another Burke. The Burke who criticized the modern colonial state, who campaigned against the British administration in India, who led an eight years prosecution of Warren Hastings, governor of Bengal and head of the East India Trading company. A Burke who described the violence, both material and cultural, that colonialism inflicted upon subject peoples. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. has noted, Burke, the reactionary critic of enlightenment universalism and the French Revolution is also a father of cultural relativism and anti-colonialism (GATES Jr., 2010, p. 28-32). Burke's emphasis on particular cultures and traditions as opposed to the universalistic discourse of "the rights of man" make him an important inspiration for Arendt:

> These facts and reflections offer what seems an ironical, bitter and belated confirmation of the famous arguments with which Edmund Burke opposed the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man. They appear to buttress his assertion that human rights were an "abstraction", that it was much wiser to rely on an "entailed inheritance" of rights which one transmits to one's children like life itself, and to claim one's rights to be the "rights of an Englishman" rather than the

> inalienable rights of man. According to Burke, the rights which we enjoy spring "from within the nation", so that neither natural law, nor divine command, nor any concept of mankind such as Robespierre's "human race", "the sovereign of the earth", are needed as a source of law. The pragmatic soundness of Burke's concept seems to be beyond doubt in light of our manifold experiences. (ARENDT, 2017, p. 391-392)

Turning to Williams, *Culture and Society* begins with Edmund Burke. For Williams, Burke begins the tradition of deploying culture as means of critiquing industrial society, but also sets in place a significant definition of national belonging:

> [Burke] prepared a position in the English mind from which the march of industrialism and liberalism was to be continually attacked. He established the idea of the State as the necessary agent of human perfection, and in terms of this idea the aggressive individualism of the nineteenth century was bound to be condemned. He established, further, the idea of what has been called an "organic society", where the emphasis is on the interrelation and continuity of human activities, rather than on separation into spheres of interest, each governed by its own laws.

> "A nation is not an idea only of local extent, and individual momentary aggregation; but it is an idea of continuity, which extends in time as well as in numbers and in space. And this is a choice not of one day, or one set of people, not a tumultuary and giddy choice; it is a deliberate election of the ages and of generations; it is a constitution made by what is ten thousand times better than choice, it is made by the peculiar circumstances, occasions, tempers, dispositions, and moral, civil, and social habitudes of the people, which disclose themselves only in a long space of time"[11].

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11 Burke, 1782 apud Williams (1982, p. 110).

> Immediately after Burke, this complex which he
> describes was to be called the "spirit of the nation";
> by the end of the nineteenth century, it was called a
> national "culture". Examination of the influence and
> development of these ideas belongs to my later chapters.
> (WILLIAMS R, 1982, p. 11)

But in fact, "these ideas", at least as they relate to the "nation" which seems to be the subject of Burke's thoughts here, do not return in Williams's later chapters. Nor for that matter do they appear in *The Long Revolution*, the 1961 sequel to *Culture and Society*. Indeed, while the idea of nationhood is an explicit concern of the novels and the essays on Wales and Welshness that Williams began to write in the early 1970s, it is not until *Towards 2000* in 1983 that he engages with national identity both theoretically and at length.

For Williams and Arendt, the form that common humanity would take was not a globally individualist universalism, but it would be based on the universalizing claim that every individual is inseparable from his or her local communal or national particularity. Humanity must be developed within local communities as part of a shared value common to all local, particular, communities in order to guarantee, universally, a human "rights to have rights". This model, as Mark Greif has noted, would seem to require a form of supra-national, planetary or species-level guarantee, some sort of over-law or world government to ensure that all communities lived up to their ethical and moral responsibilities (GREIF, 2015, p. 94). "Politically" stated Arendt, "before drawing up the constitution of a new body politic, we shall have to create – not merely discover – a new foundation for human community as such" (ARENDT, 1951, p. 434). In response to "political forms that now limit, subordinate and destroy people", stated Raymond Williams, "we have to begin again with people and build new political forms" (WILLIAMS R, 1983, p. 199). Their similar prognoses seem thoroughly utopian today. But they do, perhaps, suggest a direction for our future thinking and teaching.

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