



A n t h o n y G i d d e n s
R u n a w a y W o r l d

Full details of the five lectures and follow-up debate can be found at BBC On-line:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/default.htm.

The lectures were originally delivered in April 1999 from a variety of locations around the world. Go to the next page for the first lecture on **Globalization**.

Lecture 1

Globalisation - London



A friend of mine studies village life in central Africa. A few years ago, she paid her first visit to a remote area where she was to carry out her fieldwork. The evening she got there, she was invited to a local home for an evening's entertainment. She expected to find out about the traditional pastimes of this isolated community. Instead, the evening turned out to be a viewing of Basic Instinct on video. The film at that point hadn't even reached the cinemas in London.

Such vignettes reveal something about our world. And what they reveal isn't trivial. It isn't just a matter of people adding modern paraphernalia - videos, TVs, personal computers and so forth - to their traditional ways of life. We live in a world of transformations, affecting almost every aspect of what we do. For better or worse, we are being propelled into a global order that no one fully understands, but which is making its effects felt upon all of us.

Globalisation is the main theme of my lecture tonight, and of the lectures as a whole. The term may not be - it isn't - a particularly attractive or elegant one. But absolutely no-one who wants to understand our prospects and possibilities at century's end can ignore it. I travel a lot to speak abroad. I haven't been to a single country recently where globalisation isn't being intensively discussed. In France, the word is mondialisation. In Spain and Latin America, it is globalizacion. The Germans say globalisierung.

The global spread of the term is evidence of the very developments to which it refers. Every business guru talks about it. No political speech is complete without reference to it. Yet as little as 10 years ago the term was hardly used, either in the academic literature or in everyday language. It has come from nowhere to be almost everywhere. Given its sudden popularity, we shouldn't be surprised that the meaning of the notion isn't always clear, or that an intellectual reaction has set in against it. Globalisation has something to do with the thesis that we now all live in one world - but in what ways exactly, and is the idea really valid?

Different thinkers have taken almost completely opposite views about globalisation in debates that have sprung up over the past few years. Some dispute the whole thing. I'll call them the sceptics. According to the sceptics, all the talk about globalisation is only that - just talk. Whatever its benefits, its trials and tribulations, the global economy isn't especially different from that which existed at previous periods. The world carries on much the same as it has done for many years. Most countries, the sceptics argue, only gain a small amount of their income from external trade. Moreover, a good deal of economic exchange is between regions, rather than being truly world-wide. The countries of the European Union, for example, mostly trade among themselves. The same is true of the other main trading blocs, such as those of the Asia Pacific or North America.

Others, however, take a very different position. I'll label them the radicals. The radicals argue that not only is globalisation very real, but that its consequences can be felt everywhere. The global marketplace, they say, is much more developed than even two or three decades ago, and is indifferent to national borders. Nations have lost most of the sovereignty they once had, and politicians have lost most of their capability to influence events. It isn't surprising that no one respects political leaders any more, or has much interest in what they have to say. The era of the nation state is over. Nations, as the Japanese business writer Kenichi Ohmae puts it, have become mere 'fictions'. Authors like Ohmae see the economic difficulties of last year and this as demonstrating the reality of globalisation, albeit seen from its disruptive side.

The sceptics tend to be on the political left, especially the old left. For if all of this is essentially a myth, governments can still intervene in economic life and the welfare state remain intact. The notion of globalisation, according to the sceptics, is an ideology put about by free-marketeers who wish to dismantle welfare systems and cut back on state expenditures. What has happened is at most a reversion to how the world was a century ago. In the late 19th Century there was already an open global economy, with a great deal of trade, including trade in currencies.

Well, who is right in this debate? I think it is the radicals. The level of world trade today is much higher than it ever was before, and involves a much wider range of goods and services. But the biggest difference is in the level of finance and capital flows. Geared as it is to electronic money - money that exists only as digits in computers - the current world economy has no parallels in earlier times. In the new global electronic economy, fund managers, banks, corporations, as well as millions of individual investors, can transfer vast amounts of capital from one side of the world to another at the click of a mouse. As they do so, they can destabilise what might have seemed rock-solid economies - as happened in East Asia.

The volume of world financial transactions is usually measured in US dollars. A million dollars is a lot of money for most people. Measured as a stack of thousand dollar notes, it would be eight inches high. A billion dollars - in other words, a million million - would be over 120 miles high, 20 times higher than Mount Everest.

Yet far more than a trillion dollars is now turned over each day on global currency markets, a massive increase from only 10 years ago, let alone the more distant past. The value of whatever money we may have in our pockets, or our bank accounts, shifts from moment to moment according to fluctuations in such markets. I would have no hesitation, therefore, in saying that globalisation, as we are experiencing it, is in many respects not only new, but revolutionary.

However, I don't believe either the sceptics or the radicals have properly understood either what it is or its implications for us. Both groups see the phenomenon almost solely in economic terms. This is a mistake. Globalisation is political, technological and cultural, as well as economic. It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back only to the late 1960's.

In the mid-19th Century, a Massachusetts portrait painter, Samuel Morse, transmitted the first message, "What hath god wrought?", by electric telegraph. In so doing, he initiated a new phase in world history. Never before could a message be sent without someone going somewhere to carry it. Yet the advent of satellite communications marks every bit as dramatic a break with the past. The first communications satellite was launched only just over 30 years ago. Now there are more than 200 such satellites above the earth, each carrying a vast range of information. For the first time ever, instantaneous communication is possible from one side of the world to the other. Other types of electronic communication, more and more integrated with satellite transmission, have also accelerated over the past few years. No dedicated transatlantic or transpacific cables existed at all until the late 1950's. The first held less than 100 voice paths. Those of today carry more than a million.

On the first of February 1999, about 150 years after Morse invented his system of dots and dashes, Morse code finally disappeared from the world stage, discontinued as a means of communication for the sea. In its place has come a system using satellite technology, whereby any ship in distress can be pinpointed immediately. Most countries prepared for the transition some while before. The French, for example, stopped using Morse as a distress code in their local waters two years ago, signing off with a Gallic flourish: 'Calling all. This is our last cry before our eternal silence'.

Instantaneous electronic communication isn't just a way in which news or information is conveyed more quickly. Its existence alters the very texture of our lives, rich and poor alike. When the image of Nelson Mandela maybe is more familiar to us than the face of our next door neighbour, something has changed in the nature of our everyday experience.

Nelson Mandela is a global celebrity, and celebrity itself is largely a product of new communications technology. The reach of media technologies is growing with each wave of innovation. It took 40 years for radio in the United States to gain an audience of 50 million. The same number were using personal computers only 15 years after the PC was introduced. It needed a mere four years, after it was made available for 50 million Americans to be regularly using the Internet.

It is wrong to think of globalisation as just concerning the big systems, like the world financial order. Globalisation isn't only about what is 'out there', remote and far away from the individual. It is an 'in here' phenomenon too, influencing intimate and personal aspects of our lives. The debate about family values, for example, that is going on in many countries, might seem far removed from globalising influences. It isn't. Traditional family systems are becoming transformed, or are under

strain, in many parts of the world, particularly as women stake claim to greater equality. There has never before been a society, so far as we know from the historical record, in which women have been even approximately equal to men. This is a truly global revolution in everyday life, whose consequences are being felt around the world in spheres from work to politics.

Globalisation thus is a complex set of processes, not a single one. And these operate in a contradictory or oppositional fashion. Most people think of it as simply 'pulling away' power or influence from local communities and nations into the global arena. And indeed this is one of its consequences. Nations do lose some of the economic power they once had. However, it also has an opposite effect. Globalisation not only pulls upwards, it pushes downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy. The American sociologist Daniel Bell expresses this very well when he says that the nation becomes too small to solve the big problems, but also too large to solve the small ones.

Globalisation is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world. If one asks, for example, why the Scots want more independence in the UK, or why there is a strong separatist movement in Quebec, the answer is not to be found only in their cultural history. Local nationalisms spring up as a response to globalising tendencies, as the hold of older nation-states weakens.

Globalisation also squeezes sideways. It creates new economic and cultural zones within and across nations. Examples are the Hong Kong region, northern Italy, or Silicon Valley in California. The area around Barcelona in northern Spain extends over into France. Catalonia, where Barcelona is located, is closely integrated into the European Union. It is part of Spain, yet also looks outwards. The changes are being propelled by a range of factors, some structural, others more specific and historical. Economic influences are certainly among the driving forces, especially the global financial system. Yet they aren't like forces of nature. They have been shaped by technology, and cultural diffusion, as well as by the decisions of governments to liberalise and deregulate their national economies.

The collapse of Soviet communism has added further weight to such developments, since no significant group of countries any longer stands outside. That collapse wasn't just something that happened to occur. Globalisation explains both why and how Soviet communism met its end. The Soviet Union and the East European countries were comparable to the West in terms of growth rates until somewhere around the early 1970s. After that point, they fell rapidly behind. Soviet communism, with its emphasis upon state-run enterprise and heavy industry, could not compete in the global electronic economy. The ideological and cultural control upon which communist political authority was based similarly could not survive in an era of global media.

The Soviet and the East European regimes were unable to prevent the reception of western radio and TV broadcasts. Television played a direct role in the 1989 revolutions, which have rightly been called the first "television revolutions". Street protests taking place in one country were watched by the audiences in others, large numbers of whom then took to the streets themselves.

Globalisation, of course, isn't developing in an even-handed way, and is by no means wholly benign in its consequences. To many living outside Europe and North America, it looks uncomfortably like Westernisation - or, perhaps, Americanisation, since the US is now the sole superpower, with a dominant economic, cultural and military position in the global order. Many of the most visible cultural expressions of globalisation are American - Coca-Cola, McDonald's.

Most of giant multinational companies are based in the US too. Those that aren't all come from the rich countries, not the poorer areas of the world. A pessimistic view of globalisation would consider it largely an affair of the industrial North, in which the developing societies of the South play little or no active part. It would see it as destroying local cultures, widening world inequalities and worsening the lot of the impoverished. Globalisation, some argue, creates a world of winners and losers, a few on the fast track to prosperity, the majority condemned to a life of misery and despair. And indeed the statistics are daunting. The share of the poorest fifth of the world's population in global income has dropped from 2.3% to 1.4% over the past 10 years. The proportion taken by the richest fifth, on the other hand, has risen from 70% to 85%. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 20 countries have lower incomes per head in real terms than they did two decades ago. In many less developed countries, safety and environmental regulations are low or virtually non-existent. Some trans-

national companies sell goods there that are controlled or banned in the industrial countries - poor quality medical drugs, destructive pesticides or high tar and nicotine content cigarettes. As one writer put it recently, rather than a global village, this is more like global pillage.

Along with ecological risk, to which it is related, expanding inequality is the most serious problem facing world society. It will not do, however, merely to blame it on the wealthy. It is fundamental to my argument that globalisation today is only partly Westernisation. Of course the western nations, and more generally the industrial countries, still have far more influence over world affairs than do the poorer states. But globalisation is becoming increasingly de-centred - not under the control of any group of nations, and still less of the large corporations. Its effects are felt just as much in the western countries as elsewhere.

This is true of the global financial system, communications and media, and of changes affecting the nature of government itself. Examples of 'reverse colonisation' are becoming more and more common. Reverse colonisation means that non-western countries influence developments in the west. Examples abound - such as the Latinising of Los Angeles, the emergence of a globally-oriented high-tech sector in India, or the selling of Brazilian TV programmes to Portugal.

Is globalisation a force promoting the general good? The question can't be answered in simple way, given the complexity of the phenomenon. People who ask it, and who blame globalisation for deepening world inequalities, usually have in mind economic globalisation, and within that, free trade. Now it is surely obvious that free trade is not an unalloyed benefit. This is especially so as concerns the less developed countries. Opening up a country, or regions within it, to free trade can undermine a local subsistence economy. An area that becomes dependent upon a few products sold on world markets is very vulnerable to shifts in prices as well as to technological change.

Trade always needs a framework of institutions, as do other forms of economic development.

Markets cannot be created by purely economic means, and how far a given economy should be exposed to the world marketplace must depend upon a range of criteria. Yet to oppose economic globalisation, and to opt for economic protectionism, would be a misplaced tactic for rich and poor nations alike. Protectionism may be a necessary strategy at some times and in some countries. In my view, for example, Malaysia was correct to introduce controls in 1998, to stem the flood of capital from the country. But more permanent forms of protectionism will not help the development of the poor countries, and among the rich would lead to warring trade blocs.

The debates about globalisation I mentioned at the beginning have concentrated mainly upon its implications for the nation-state. Are nation-states, and hence national political leaders, still powerful, or are they becoming largely irrelevant to the forces shaping the world? Nation-states are indeed still powerful and political leaders have a large role to play in the world. Yet at the same time the nation-state is being reshaped before our eyes. National economic policy can't be as effective as it once was. More importantly, nations have to rethink their identities now the older forms of geopolitics are becoming obsolete. Although this is a contentious point, I would say that, following the dissolving of the cold war, nations no longer have enemies. Who are the enemies of Britain, or France, or Japan? Nations today face risks and dangers rather than enemies, a massive shift in their very nature.

It isn't only of the nation that such comments could be made. Everywhere we look, we see institutions that appear the same as they used to be from the outside, and carry the same names, but inside have become quite different. We continue to talk of the nation, the family, work, tradition, nature, as if they were all the same as in the past. They are not. The outer shell remains, but inside all is different - and this is happening not only in the US, Britain, or France, but almost everywhere. They are what I call shell institutions, and I shall talk about them quite a bit in the lectures to come.

They are institutions that have become inadequate to the tasks they are called upon to perform.

As the changes I have described in this lecture gather weight, they are creating something that has never existed before, a global cosmopolitan society. We are the first generation to live in this society, whose contours we can as yet only dimly see. It is shaking up our existing ways of life, no matter where we happen to be. This is not - at least at the moment - a global order driven by collective human will. Instead, it is emerging in an anarchic, haphazard, fashion, carried along by a mixture of economic, technological and cultural imperatives.

It is not settled or secure, but fraught with anxieties, as well as scarred by deep divisions. Many of

us feel in the grip of forces over which we have no control. Can we re-impose our will upon them? I believe we can. The powerlessness we experience is not a sign of personal failings, but reflects the incapacities of our institutions. We need to reconstruct those we have, or create new ones, in ways appropriate to the global age.

We should and we can look to achieve greater control over our runaway world. We shan't be able to do so if we shirk the challenges, or pretend that all can go on as before. For globalisation is not incidental to our lives today. It is a shift in our very life circumstances. It is the way we now live.

L e c t u r e 2

R i s k - H o n g K o n g

July 1998 was possibly the hottest month in world history. 1998 as a whole may have been the hottest year. Heat waves caused havoc in many areas of the northern hemisphere. In Eilat, in Israel, for example, temperatures rose to almost 50 degrees Centigrade, while water consumption in the country went up by 40%. Texas, in the United States, experienced temperatures not far short of this. For the first eight months of the year, each month topped the record for that month. A short while later, however, in some of the areas affected by the heat waves, snow fell in places that had never seen it before.

Are temperature shifts like this the result of human interference with the world's climate? We can't be sure, but we have to admit the possibility they might be, together with the increased numbers of hurricanes, typhoons and storms that have been noted in recent years. As a consequence of global industrial development, we may have altered the world's climate, and damaged a great deal more of our earthly habitat besides. We don't know what further changes will result, or the dangers they will bring in their train.

The theme of my lecture today is risk. I hope to persuade you that this apparently simple notion unlocks some of the most basic characteristics of the world in which we now live.

At first sight, the concept of risk might seem to have no specific relevance to our times, as compared to previous ages. After all, haven't people always had to face their fair share of risks? Life for the majority in the European Middle Ages was nasty, brutish and short - as it is for many in poorer areas of the world now.

But here we come across something really interesting. Apart from some marginal contexts, in the Middle Ages there was no concept of risk. Nor, so far as I have been able to find out, was there in most other traditional cultures. The idea of risk appears to have taken hold in the 16th and 17th centuries, and was first coined by Western explorers as they set off on their voyages across the world. The word 'risk' seems to have come into English through Spanish or Portuguese, where it was used to refer to sailing into uncharted waters. Originally, in other words, it had an orientation to space. Later, it became transferred to time, as used in banking and investment - to mean calculation of the probable consequences of investment decisions for borrowers and lenders. It subsequently came to refer to a wide range of other situations of uncertainty.

The notion of risk, I should point out, is inseparable from the ideas of probability and uncertainty. A person can't be said to be running a risk where an outcome is 100% certain.

There is an old joke that makes this point rather neatly. A man jumps from the top of a hundred-story skyscraper. As he passed each floor, on his way down, the people inside hear him saying: 'so far so good', 'so far so good', 'so far so good', ... He acts as though he is making a risk calculation, but the outcome is in fact determined. Traditional cultures didn't have a concept of risk because they didn't need one. Risk isn't the same as hazard or danger. Risk refers to hazards that are actively assessed in relation to future possibilities. It only comes into wide usage in a society that is future-oriented - which sees the future precisely as a territory to be conquered or colonised. Risk presumes a society that actively tries to break away from its past - the prime characteristic indeed of modern industrial civilisation.

All previous cultures, including the great early civilisations of the world, such as Rome, or traditional China, have lived primarily in the past. They have used the ideas of fate, luck or the 'will of the gods' where we now tend to substitute risk. In traditional cultures, if someone meets with an accident, or conversely, prospers - well, it is just one of those things, or it is what the gods and spirits intended. Some cultures have denied the idea of chance happenings altogether. The Azande, an African tribe, believe that when a misfortune befalls someone it is the result of sorcery. If an individual falls ill, for example, it is because an enemy has been practising black magic.

Such views, of course, don't disappear completely with modernisation. Magical notions, concepts of

fate and cosmology still have a hold. But often they continue on as superstitions, in which people only half believe, and follow in a somewhat embarrassed way. They use them to back up decisions of a more calculative nature. Gamblers, and this includes gamblers on the stock exchange, mostly have rituals that psychologically paper over the uncertainties they must confront. The same applies to many risks that we can't help running, since being alive at all is by definition a risky business. It isn't in any way surprising, that people still consult astrologers, especially at vital points of their lives.

Yet acceptance of risk is also the condition of excitement and adventure - think of the pleasures some people get from the risks of gambling, driving fast, sexual adventurism, or the plunge of a fairground rollercoaster. Moreover, a positive embrace of risk is the very source of that energy which creates wealth in a modern economy.

The two aspects of risk - its negative and positive sides - appear from the early days of modern industrial society. Risk is the mobilising dynamic of a society bent on change, that wants to determine its own future rather than leaving it to religion, tradition, or the vagaries of nature. Modern capitalism differs from all previous forms of economic system in terms of its attitudes towards the future. Previous types of market enterprise were irregular or partial. The activities of merchants and traders for example, never made much dent in the basic structure of traditional civilisations, which all remained heavily agricultural and rural. Modern capitalism embeds itself into the future by calculating future profit and loss, and therefore risk, as a continuous process. This wasn't possible until the invention of double entry bookkeeping in the 15th Century in Europe, which made it possible to track in a precise way how money can be invested to make more money. Many risks, of course, such as those affecting health, we do wish to reduce as far as possible. This is why from its origins, the notion of risk is accompanied by the rise of insurance. We shouldn't think only of private or commercial insurance here. The welfare state, whose development can be traced back to the Elizabethan poor laws in England, is essentially a risk management system. It is designed to protect against hazards that were once treated as at the disposition of the gods - sickness, disablement, job loss and old age.

Insurance is the baseline against which people are prepared to take risks, it is the basis of security where fate has been ousted by an active engagement with the future. Like the idea of risk, modern forms of insurance began with seafaring. The earliest marine insurances were written in the 16th Century, a London company first underwrote an overseas risk in 1782. Lloyds of London took a leading position in the emerging insurance industry, which it has sustained for two centuries. Insurance is only conceivable where we believe in a humanly engineered future. It is one of the means of doing that engineering. Insurance is about providing security, but it is actually parasitic upon risk and people's attitudes towards it. Those who provide insurance, whether in the shape of private insurance or state welfare systems, are essentially simply redistributing risk. If someone takes out fire insurance against his or her house burning down, the risk doesn't go away. The householder trades off the risk to the insurer in exchange for payment. The trading and offloading of risk isn't just a casual feature of a capitalist economy. Capitalism is actually unthinkable and unworkable without it.

For these reasons, the idea of risk has always been involved in modernity, but I want to argue that in the current period risk assumes a new and peculiar importance. Risk was supposed to be a way of regulating the future, of normalising it and bringing it under our dominion. Things haven't turned out that way. Our very attempts to control the future tend to rebound upon us, forcing us to look for different ways of relating to uncertainty.

The best way to explain what is going on is to make a distinction between two types of risk. One I shall call external risk. External risk is risk experienced as coming from the outside, from the fixities of tradition or nature. I want to distinguish this from manufactured risk, by which I mean risk created by the very impact of our developing knowledge upon the world. Manufactured risk refers to risk situations which we have very little historical experience for confronting. Most environmental risks, such as these connected with global warming, fall into this category. They are directly influenced by the intensifying globalisation I discussed in my opening lecture.

The best way I can clarify the distinction between the two kinds of risk is as follows. In all traditional cultures, one could say, and in industrial society right up to the threshold of the present

day, human beings worried about the risks coming from external nature - from bad harvests, floods, plagues or famines. At a certain point, however - very recently in historical terms - we started worrying less about what nature can do to us, and more about what we have done to nature. This marks the transition from the predominance of external risk to that of manufactured risk.

Who are the 'we' here, doing the worrying? Well I think now it is all of us, regardless of whether we are in the richer or poorer areas of the world. At the same time, it is obvious that there is a division that by and large separates the affluent regions from the rest. Many more 'traditional' risks, of the sort just mentioned - such as the risk of famine when the harvest is bad - still exist in proper countries overlapping with the new risks.

Our society lives after the end of nature. The end of nature doesn't mean, obviously, that the physical world or physical processes cease to exist. It refers to the fact that there are few aspects of our surrounding material environment that haven't been in some way affected by human intervention. Much of what used to be natural isn't completely natural any more, although we can't always be sure where the one stops and the other begins. Last year there were big floods in central China, in which many people lost their lives. The flooding of the major rivers has been a recurrent part of Chinese history. Were these particular floods more of the same, or were they influenced by global climate change? No one knows, but there are some unusual features of the floods that suggest their causes were not wholly natural.

Manufactured risk doesn't only concern nature - or what used to be nature. It penetrates into other areas of life too. Take, for example, marriage and the family, now undergoing profound changes in the industrial countries and to some extent world-wide. Two or three generations ago, when people got married, they knew what it was they were doing. Marriage, largely fixed by tradition and custom, was akin to a state of nature - as of course remains true in many countries. Where traditional cultures are dissolving, however, when people marry, or form relationships, there is an important sense in which they don't know what they are doing, because the institutions of marriage and the family have changed so much. Here individuals are striking out afresh, like pioneers. It is inevitable in such situations, whether they know it or not, that people start thinking more and more in terms of risk. They have to confront personal futures that are much more open than in the past, with all the opportunities and hazards this brings.

As manufactured risk expands, there is a new riskiness to risk. The rise of the idea of risk, as I pointed out earlier, was closely tied to the possibility of calculation. Most forms of insurance are based directly upon this connection. Every time someone steps into a car, for instance, one can calculate that person's chances of being involved in an accident. This is actuarial prediction - there is a long time-series to go on. Situations of manufactured risk aren't like this. We simply don't know what the level of risk is, and in many cases we won't know for sure until it is too late. Not long ago was the 10th anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear station in Ukraine. No one knows what its long-term consequences will be. There might or might not be a stored-up disaster to health due to happen some while from now. Exactly the same is true of the BSE episode in the UK - the outbreak of so-called mad cow disease, in terms of its implications for humans. At the moment, we can't be sure whether at some point many more people than at present will fall ill.

Or consider where we stand with world climate change. Most scientists well versed in the field believe that global warming is occurring and that measures should be taken against it. Yet only about 25 or so years ago, orthodox scientific opinion was that the world was in a phase of global cooling. Much the same evidence that was deployed to support the hypothesis of global cooling is now brought into play to bolster that of global warming - heat waves, cold spells, unusual types of weather. Is global warming occurring, and does it have human origins? Probably - but we won't, and can't, be completely sure until it is too late.

In these circumstances, there is a new moral climate of politics, marked by a push-and-pull between accusations of scaremongering on the one hand, and of cover-ups on the other. If anyone - government official, scientific expert or researcher - takes a given risk seriously, he or she must proclaim it. It must be widely publicised because people must be persuaded that the risk is real - a fuss must be made about it. Yet if a fuss is indeed created and the risk turns out to be minimal, those involved will be accused of scaremongering.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the authorities initially decide that the risk is not very great, as the

British government did in the case of contaminated beef. In this instance, the government first of all said: we've got the backing of scientists here; there isn't a significant risk, we can continue eating beef without any worries. In such situations, if events turn out otherwise - as in fact they did - the authorities will be accused of a cover-up - as indeed they were.

Things are even more complex than these examples suggest. Paradoxically, scaremongering may be necessary to reduce risks we face - yet if it is successful, it appears as just that, scaremongering.

The case of AIDS is an example. Governments and experts made great public play with the risks associated with unsafe sex, to get people to change their sexual behaviour. Partly as a consequence, in the developed countries, AIDS did not spread as much as was originally predicted. Then the response was: why were you scaring everyone like that? Yet as we know from its continuing global spread - they were - and are - entirely right to do so.

This sort of paradox becomes routine in contemporary society, but there is no easily available way of dealing with it. For as I mentioned earlier, in most situations of manufactured risk, even whether there are risks at all is likely to be disputed. We cannot know beforehand when we are actually scaremongering and when we are not.

Our relationship to science and technology today is different from that characteristic of earlier times. In Western society, for some two centuries, science functioned as a sort of tradition.

Scientific knowledge was supposed to overcome tradition, but actually in a way became one in its own right. It was something that most people respected, but was external to their activities. Lay people 'took' opinions from the experts.

The more science and technology intrude into our lives, and do so on a global level the less this perspective holds. Most of us - including government authorities and politicians - have, and have to have, a much more active or engaged relationship with science and technology than used to be the case.

We cannot simply 'accept' the findings which scientists produce, if only because scientists so frequently disagree with one another, particularly in situations of manufactured risk. And everyone now recognises the essentially sceptical character of science. Whenever someone decides what to eat, what to have for breakfast, whether to drink decaffeinated or ordinary coffee, that person takes a decision in the context of conflicting and changeable scientific and technological information.

Consider, for instance, red wine. As with other alcoholic drinks, red wine was once thought harmful to health. Research then indicated that drinking red wine in reasonable quantities protects against heart disease. Subsequently it was found that any form of alcohol will do, but it is only protective for people above age 40. Who knows what the next set of findings will show?

Some say that the most effective way to cope with the rise of manufactured risk is to limit responsibility by adopting the so-called 'precautionary principle'. The notion of the precautionary principle first emerged in Germany about 15 years ago, in the context of the ecological debates that were carried on there. At its simplest, it proposes that action on environmental issues (and by inference other forms of risk) should be taken even though there is insecure scientific evidence about them. Thus in the 1980's, in several Continental countries, programmes were initiated to counter acid rain, whereas in Britain lack of conclusive evidence was used to justify inactivity about this and other pollution problems too.

Yet the precautionary principle isn't always helpful or even applicable as a means of coping with problems of risk and responsibility. The precept of 'staying close to nature', or of limiting innovation rather than embracing it, can't always apply. The reason is that the balance of benefits and dangers from scientific and technological advance, and other forms of social change too, is imponderable. We may need quite often to be bold rather than cautious in supporting scientific innovation or other forms of change. After all, one root of the term risk in the original Portuguese means 'to dare'. Take as an example the controversy over genetically modified foods. Genetically modified crops are already growing on 35 million hectares of land across the world - an area 12 times the size of Britain. Most are being grown in North America and China. Crops include soya, maize, cotton and potatoes.

No more obvious situation could be found where nature is no longer nature. The risks involve a number of unknowns - or, if I can put it this way, known unknowns, because the world has a pronounced tendency to surprise us. There may be other consequences that no one has yet

anticipated. One type of risk, is that the crops may carry medium or long-term healthy hazards. After all, a good deal of gene technology, is essentially new, different from older methods of cross-breeding.

Another possibility is that genes incorporated into crops, to increase resistance to pests might spread to other plants - creating 'super weeds'. This in turn could pose a threat to biodiversity in the environment.

Since pressure to grow, and consume, genetically modified crops is partly driven by sheer commercial interests, wouldn't it be sensible to impose a global ban on them? But even supposing such a ban were feasible, things - as ever - are not so simple. The intensive agriculture widely practised today is not indefinitely sustainable. It uses large amounts of chemical fertilisers and insecticides, destructive to the environment. We can't go back to more traditional modes of farming and still hope to feed the world's population.

Bioengineered crops could reduce the use of chemical pollutants, and hence resolve these problems. Whichever way you look at it, we are caught up in risk management. With the spread of manufactured risk, governments can't pretend such management isn't their business. And they need to collaborate, since very few new-style risks, have anything to do with the borders of nations. But neither, as ordinary individuals, can we ignore these new risks - or wait for definitive science evidence to arrive. As consumers, each of us has to decide, whether to try to avoid genetically modified products or not. These risks, and the dilemmas surrounding them, have entered deeply into our everyday lives.

Let me move towards some conclusions and at the same time try to make sure my arguments are clear. Our age is not more dangerous - not more risky - than those of earlier generations - but the balance of risks and dangers has shifted. We live in a world where hazards created by ourselves are as, or more, threatening than those that come from the outside. Some of these are genuinely catastrophic, such as global ecological risk, nuclear proliferation, or the meltdown of the world economy. Others affect us as individuals much more directly, for instance, those involved in diet, medicine, or even marriage.

An era such as ours will inevitably breed religious revivalism and diverse New Age philosophies, which turn against a scientific outlook. Some ecological thinkers have become hostile to science, and even to rational thought more generally, because of ecological risks. This isn't an attitude that makes much sense. We wouldn't even know about these risks without scientific analysis. However, our relationship to science, for reasons already given, won't and can't be the same as in previous times.

We do not currently possess institutions which allow us to monitor technological change, nationally or globally. The BSE debacle in Britain and elsewhere, might have been avoided, if a public dialogue had already been established about technological change and its problematic consequences. More public means of engaging with science and technology wouldn't do away with the quandary of scaremongering versus cover-ups, but it might allow us to reduce some of its more damaging consequences.

Finally, there can be no question of merely taking a negative attitude towards risk. Risk always needs to be disciplined, but active risk-taking is a core element of a dynamic economy and an innovative society. What more appropriate place could there be to emphasise this than here in Hong Kong?

Lecture 3

Tradition - Delhi

When Scots get together to celebrate their national identity, they do so in ways steeped in tradition. Men wear the kilt, with each clan having its own tartan - and their ceremonials are accompanied by the wail of the bagpipes. By means of these symbols, they show their loyalty to ancient rituals - rituals whose origins go far back into antiquity.

Except for the fact that they don't. Along with most other symbols of Scottishness, all these are quite recent creations. The short kilt seems to have been invented by an English industrialist from Lancashire, Thomas Rawlinson, in the early 18th Century. He set out to alter the existing dress of highlanders to make it convenient for workmen.

Kilts were a product of the industrial revolution. The aim was not to preserve time-honoured customs, but the opposite - to bring the highlanders out of the heather and into the factory. The kilt didn't start life as the national dress of Scotland. The lowlanders, who made up the large majority of Scots, saw highland dress as a barbaric form of clothing, which most looked on with some contempt. Similarly, many of the clan tartans worn now were devised during the Victorian period, by enterprising tailors who correctly saw a market in them.

Much of what we think of as traditional, and steeped in the mists of time, is actually a product at most of the last couple of centuries, and is often much more recent than that. The case of the Scottish kilt comes from a celebrated volume by the historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, called *The Invention of Tradition*. They give examples of invented traditions from a variety of different countries, including colonial India.

The British set up an archaeological survey in the 1860s to identify the great monuments of India and to preserve Indian 'heritage'. Believing local arts and crafts to be in decline, they collected together artefacts to put in museums. Before 1860, for example, Indian soldiers and the British both wore Western-style uniforms. But in the eyes of the British, Indians had to look like Indians. The dress uniforms were modified to include turbans, sashes and tunics regarded as 'authentic'. Some of the traditions they invented, or half invented, continue on in the country today, although of course others were later rejected.

Tradition and custom - these have been the stuff of most people's lives for most of human history. Yet it is remarkable how little interest scholars and thinkers tend to show in them. There are endless discussions of modernisation and what it means to be modern, but few indeed about tradition.

When I was researching for this lecture, I came across dozens of academic books in English with 'modernity' in the title. Indeed, I have written a few myself - but I could only discover a couple of books specifically about tradition.

It was the 18th Century Enlightenment in Europe that gave tradition a bad name. One of its major figures, the Baron D'Holbach, put things this way. I quote: 'Instructors have long enough fixed men's eyes upon heaven, let them now turn them upon earth. Fatigued with an inconceivable theology, ridiculous fables, impenetrable mysteries, puerile ceremonies, let the human mind apply itself to the study of nature, to intelligible objects, sensible truths, and useful knowledge. Let the vain chimeras of men be removed, and reasonable opinions will soon come of themselves, into those heads which were thought to be forever destined to error'.

It is clear that D'Holbach never intended a serious engagement with tradition and its role in society. Tradition here is merely the shadow side of modernity, an implausible construct that can be easily brushed aside. If we are really to get to grips with tradition, we can't treat it merely as folly. The linguistic roots of the word tradition are old. The English word has its origins in the Latin term *tradere*, which meant to transmit, or give something to another for safekeeping. *Tradere* was originally used in the context of Roman Law, where it referred to the laws of inheritance. Property that passed from one generation to another was supposed to be given in trust - the inheritor had

obligations to protect and nurture it.

It might seem that the notion of tradition, unlike kilts and bagpipes, has been around for many centuries. Once more, appearances are deceptive. The term 'tradition' as it is used today is actually a product of the last 200 years in Europe. Just like the concept of risk, which I talked about in my last lecture, in mediaeval times there was no generic notion of tradition. There was no call for such a word, precisely because tradition and custom were everywhere.

The idea of tradition, then, is itself a creation of modernity. That doesn't mean that one shouldn't use it in relation to pre-modern or non-Western societies, but it does imply that we should approach the discussion of tradition with some care. By identifying tradition with dogma and ignorance, the Enlightenment thinkers sought to justify their absorption with the new.

Disentangling ourselves from the prejudices of the Enlightenment, how should we understand 'tradition'? We can make a good start by going back to invented traditions. Invented traditions and customs, Hobsbawm and Ranger suggest, aren't genuine ones. They are contrived, rather than growing up spontaneously; they are used as a means of power; and they haven't existed since time immemorial. Whatever continuity they imply with the long-term past is largely false.

I would turn their argument on its head. All traditions, I would say, are invented traditions. No traditional societies were wholly traditional, and traditions and customs have been invented for a diversity of reasons. We shouldn't suppose that the conscious construction of tradition is found only in the modern period. Moreover, tradition always incorporates power, whether they are constructed in a deliberate way or not. Kings, emperors, priests and others have long invented traditions to suit themselves and to legitimate their rule.

It is a myth to think of traditions as impervious to change. Traditions evolve over time, but also can be quite suddenly altered or transformed. If I can put it this way, they are invented and reinvented.

Some traditions, of course, such as those associated with the great religions, have lasted for hundreds of years. There are core prescriptions of Islam, for instance, that nearly all Muslim believers would hold to, and which have remained recognisably the same over a very long period. Yet whatever continuity there is in such doctrines goes along with many changes, even revolutionary changes, in how they are interpreted and acted upon. There is no such thing as a completely pure tradition. Like all the other world religions, Islam drew upon a dazzling variety of cultural resources - that is, other traditions. The same was true of the Ottoman empire more generally, which incorporated Arab, Persian, Greek, Roman, Berber, Turkish and Indian influences, among others, across the years.

But it is simply wrong to suppose that for a given set of symbols or practices to be traditional, they must have existed for centuries. The Christmas address by the Queen, which is broadcast every year in Britain, has become a tradition. Yet it only started in 1932. Endurance over time is not the key defining feature of tradition, or of its more diffuse cousin, custom. The distinguishing characteristics of tradition are ritual and repetition. Traditions are always properties of groups, communities or collectivities. Individuals may follow traditions and customs, but traditions are not a quality of individual behaviour in the way habits are.

What is distinctive about tradition is that it defines a kind of truth. For someone following a traditional practice, questions don't have to be asked about alternatives. However much it may change, tradition provides a framework for action that can go largely unquestioned. Traditions usually have guardians - wise men, priests, sages. Guardians are not the same as experts. They get their position and power from the fact that only they are capable of interpreting tradition's ritual truth. Only they can decipher the real meanings of the sacred texts or the other symbols involved in the communal rituals.

The Enlightenment set out to destroy the authority of tradition. It only partially succeeded.

Traditions remained strong for a long while in most of modern Europe and even more firmly entrenched across most of the rest of the world. Many traditions were reinvented and others were newly instituted. There was a concerted attempt from some sectors of society to protect or adapt the old traditions. After all, this is basically what conservative philosophies have been, and are, all about. Tradition is perhaps the most basic concept of conservatism, since conservatives believe that it contains stored up wisdom.

A further reason for the persistence of tradition in the industrial countries was that the institutional

changes signalled by modernity were largely confined to public institutions - especially government and the economy. Traditional ways of doing things tended to persist, or be re-established, in many other areas of life, including everyday life. One could even say there was a sort of symbiosis between modernity and tradition. In most countries, for example, the family, sexuality, and the divisions between the sexes remained heavily saturated with tradition and custom.

Two basic changes are happening today under the impact of globalisation. In the Western countries, not just public institutions but everyday life is becoming opened up from the hold of tradition. And other societies across the world that remained more traditional are becoming detraditionalised. I take it this is at the core of the emerging global cosmopolitan society I have spoken of in previous lectures.

This is a society, I argued last week, living after the end of nature. Few aspects of the physical world, in other words, are any longer just natural - unaffected by human intervention. It is also a society living after the end of tradition. The end of tradition doesn't mean that tradition disappears, as the Enlightenment thinkers wanted. On the contrary, in different versions, it continues to flourish everywhere. But less and less - if I can put it this fashion - is it tradition lived in the traditional way. The traditional way means defending traditional activities through their own ritual and symbolism - defending tradition through its internal claims to truth.

A world where modernisation is not confined to one geographical area, but makes itself felt globally, has a number of consequences for tradition. Tradition and science sometimes mingle in odd and interesting ways. Consider, for instance, the much-discussed episode that happened in India in 1995, when the deities in some Hindu shrines appeared to drink milk. On the same day, several million people, not only in India but throughout the world, tried to offer milk to a divine image. Denis Vidal, an anthropologist who has written about this phenomenon, remarks that I quote again: 'by manifesting themselves simultaneously in every country of the world inhabited by Indians, the Hindu deities may have succeeded in performing the first ever miracle in tune with an era haunted by the slogan of globalisation'. Just as interestingly, it was widely felt - by believers as well as non-believers - that scientific experiments were needed to authenticate the miracle. Science was enlisted in the service of faith.

Tradition in such an example isn't only still alive, it is resurgent. Yet traditions also often succumb to modernity, and are doing so in some situations all over the world. Tradition that is drained of its content, and commercialised, becomes either heritage or kitsch - the trinkets bought in the airport store. As developed by the heritage industry, heritage is tradition repackaged as spectacle. The refurbished buildings at tourist sites may look splendid, and the refurbishment may even be authentic down to the last detail. But the heritage that is thereby protected is severed from the lifeblood of tradition, which is its connection with the experience of everyday life.

In my view, it is entirely rational to recognise that traditions are needed in society. We shouldn't accept the Enlightenment idea that the world should rid itself of tradition altogether. Traditions are needed, and will always persist, because they give continuity and form to life. Take academic life, as an example. Everyone in the academic world works within traditions. Even academic disciplines as a whole, like economics, sociology or philosophy, have traditions. The reason is that no one could work in a wholly eclectic fashion. Without intellectual traditions, ideas would have no focus or direction.

However, it is part of academic life continually to explore the limits of such traditions, and foster active interchange between them. Tradition can perfectly well be defended in a non-traditional way - and that should be its future. Ritual, ceremonial and repetition have an important social role, something understood and acted upon by most organisations, including governments. Traditions will continue to be sustained insofar as they can effectively be justified - not in terms of their own internal rituals, but as compared to other traditions or ways of doing things.

This is true even of religious traditions. Religion is normally associated with the idea of faith, a sort of emotional leap into belief. Yet in a cosmopolitan world, more people than ever before are regularly in contact with others who think differently from them. They are required to justify their beliefs, in an implicit way at least, both to themselves and others. There cannot but be a large dollop of rationality in the persistence of religious rituals and observances in a detraditionalising society. And this is exactly as it should be.

As tradition changes its role, however, new dynamics are introduced into our lives. These can be summarised as a push and pull between autonomy of action and compulsiveness on the one hand, and between cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism on the other. Where tradition has retreated, we are forced to live in a more open and reflective way. Autonomy and freedom can replace the hidden power of tradition with more open discussion and dialogue. But these freedoms bring other problems in their wake. A society living on the other side of nature and tradition - as nearly all Western countries now do - is one that calls for decision-making, in everyday life as elsewhere. The dark side of decision-making is the rise of addictions and compulsions. Something really intriguing, but also disturbing, is going on here. It is mostly confined to the developed countries, but is becoming seen among more middle class groups elsewhere too. What I am speaking about is the spread of the idea and the reality of addiction. The notion of addiction was originally applied exclusively to alcoholism and drug-taking. But now any area of activity can become invaded by it. One can be addicted to work, exercise, food, sex - or even love. The reason is that these activities, and other parts of life too, are much less structured by tradition and custom than once they were. Like tradition, addiction is about the influence of the past upon the present; and as in the case of tradition, repetition has a key role. The past in question is individual rather than collective, and the repetition is driven by anxiety. I would see addiction as frozen autonomy. Every context of detraditionalisation offers the possibility of greater freedom of action than existed before. We are talking here about human emancipation from the constraints of the past. Addiction comes into play when choice, which should be driven by autonomy, is subverted by anxiety. In tradition, the past structures the present through shared collective beliefs and sentiments. The addict is also in thrall to the past - but because he or she cannot break away from what were originally freely chosen lifestyle habits.

As the influence of tradition and custom shrink on a world-wide level, the very basis of our self-identity - our sense of self - changes. In more traditional situations, a sense of self is sustained largely through the stability of the social positions of individuals in the community. Where tradition lapses, and life-style choice prevails, the self isn't exempt. Self-identity has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before. This explains why therapy and counselling of all kinds have become so popular in Western countries. When he initiated modern psychotherapy, Freud thought he was establishing a scientific treatment for neurosis. What he was in effect doing was constructing a method for the renewal of self-identity, in the early stages of a detraditionalising culture.

After all, what happens in psychotherapy is that the individual revisits his or her past in order to create more autonomy for the future. Much the same is true in the self-help groups that have become so common in Western societies. At alcoholics anonymous meetings, for instance, individuals recount their life histories, and receive support from others present in stating their desire to change. They recover from their addiction essentially through rewriting the story-line of their lives.

The struggle between addiction and autonomy is at one pole of globalisation. At the other is the clash between a cosmopolitan outlook and fundamentalism. One might think that fundamentalism has always existed. This is not so - it has arisen in response to the globalising influences we see all round us. The term itself dates from the turn of the century, when it was used to refer to the beliefs of some Protestant sects in America, particularly those who rejected Darwin. Yet even in the late 1950's there was no entry for the word 'fundamentalism' in the large Oxford English dictionary. It has come into common coinage only over the past two or three decades.

Fundamentalism is not the same as either fanaticism or authoritarianism. Fundamentalists call for a return to basic scriptures or texts, supposed to be read in a literal manner, and they propose that the doctrines derived from such a reading be applied to social, economic or political life.

Fundamentalism gives new vitality and importance to the guardians of tradition. Only they have access to the 'exact meaning' of the texts. The clergy or other privileged interpreters gain secular as well as religious power. They may look to take over the reins of government directly - as happened in Iran - or work in conjunction with political parties.

Fundamentalism is a controversial word, because many of those called fundamentalists by others wouldn't accept the term as applying to themselves. So can an objective meaning be given to it? I

think it can, and I would define it in the following fashion. Fundamentalism is beleaguered tradition. It is tradition defended in the traditional way - by reference to ritual truth - in a globalising world that asks for reasons. Fundamentalism, therefore, has nothing to do with the context of beliefs, religious or otherwise. What matters is how the truth of beliefs is defended or asserted.

Fundamentalism isn't about what people believe but, like tradition more generally, about why they believe it and how they justify it. It isn't confined to religion. The Chinese red guards, with their devotion to Mao's little red book, were surely fundamentalists. Nor is fundamentalism primarily about the resistance of more traditional cultures to Westernisation - a rejection of Western decadence. Fundamentalism can develop on the soil of traditions of all sorts. It has no time for ambiguity, multiple interpretation or multiple identity - it is a refusal of dialogue in a world whose peace and continuity depend on it.

Fundamentalism is a child of globalisation, which it both responds to and utilises. Fundamentalist groups almost everywhere have made extensive use of new communications technologies. Before he came to power in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini circulated videos and cassettes of his teachings. Hindutwa militants have made extensive use of the Internet and electronic mail to create a 'feeling of Hindu identity'.

Whatever form it takes - religious, ethnic, nationalist, or directly political, I think it right to regard fundamentalism as problematic. It is edged with the possibility of violence, and it is the enemy of cosmopolitan dialogue.

Yet fundamentalism isn't just the antithesis of globalising modernity, but poses questions to it. The most basic one is this: can we live in a world where nothing is sacred? I have to say, in conclusion, that I don't think we can. Cosmopolitans, of whom I count myself one, have to make plain that tolerance and dialogue can themselves be guided by values of a universal kind.

All of us need moral commitments that stand above the petty concerns and squabbles of everyday life. We should be prepared to mount an active defence of these values wherever they are poorly developed, or threatened. None of us would have anything to live for, if we didn't have something worth dying for.

Lecture 4

Family - Washington DC

Among all the changes going on today, none are more important than those happening in our personal lives - in sexuality, emotional life, marriage and the family. There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections with others. It is a revolution advancing unevenly in different regions and cultures, with many resistances.

As with other aspects of the runaway world, we don't know what the ratio of advantages and anxieties will turn out to be. In some ways, these are the most difficult and disturbing transformations of all. Most of us can tune out from larger problems for much of the time. We can't opt out, however, from the swirl of change reaching right into the heart of our emotional lives. There are few countries in the world where there isn't intense discussion about sexual equality, the regulation of sexuality and the future of the family. And where there isn't open debate, this is mostly because it is actively repressed by authoritarian governments or fundamentalist groups. In many cases, these controversies are national or local - as are the social and political reactions to them. Politicians and pressure groups will suggest that if only family policy were modified, if only divorce were made harder or easier to get in their particular country, solutions to our problems could readily be found.

But the changes affecting the personal and emotional spheres go far beyond the borders of any particular country, even one as large as the United States. We find the same issues almost everywhere, differing only in degree and according to the cultural context in which they take place. In China, for example, the state is considering making divorce more difficult. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, very liberal marriage laws were passed. Marriage is a working contract, that can be dissolved, I quote: 'when husband and wife both desire it'.

Even if one partner objects, divorce can be granted when 'mutual affection' has gone from the marriage. Only a two week wait is required, after which the two pay \$4 and are henceforth independent. The Chinese divorce rate is still low as compared with Western countries, but it is rising rapidly - as is true in the other developing Asian societies. In Chinese cities, not only divorce, but cohabitation is becoming more frequent

In the vast Chinese countryside, by contrast, everything is different. Marriage and the family are much more traditional - in spite of the official policy of limiting childbirth through a mixture of incentives and punishment. Marriage is an arrangement between two families, fixed by the parents rather than the individuals concerned.

A recent study in the province of Gansu, which has only a low level of economic development, found that 60% of marriages are still arranged by parents. As a Chinese saying has it: 'meet once, nod your head and marry'. There is a twist in the tail in modernising China. Many of those currently divorcing in the urban centres were married in the traditional manner in the country.

In China there is much talk of protecting the family. In many Western countries the debate is even more shrill. The family is a site for the struggles between tradition and modernity, but also a metaphor for them. There is perhaps more nostalgia surrounding the lost haven of the family than for any other institution with its roots in the past. Politicians and activists routinely diagnose the breakdown of family life and call for a return to the traditional family.

Now the 'traditional family' is very much a catch-all category. There have been many different types of family and kinship systems in different societies and cultures. The Chinese family, for instance, was always distinct from family forms in the West. Arranged marriage was never as common in most European countries, as in China, or India. Yet the family in non-modern cultures did, and does, have some features found more or less everywhere.

The traditional family was above all an economic unit. Agricultural production normally involved the whole family group, while among the gentry and aristocracy, transmission of property was the

main basis of marriage. In mediaeval Europe, marriage was not contracted on the basis of sexual love, nor was it regarded as a place where such love should flourish. As the French historian, Georges Duby, puts it, marriage in the middle ages was not to involve 'frivolity, passion, or fantasy'. The inequality of men and women was intrinsic to the traditional family. I don't think one could overstate the importance of this. In Europe, women were the property of their husbands or fathers - chattels as defined in law.

In the traditional family, it wasn't only women who lacked rights - children did too. The idea of enshrining children's rights in law is in historical terms relatively recent. In premodern periods, as in traditional cultures today, children weren't reared for their own sake, or for the satisfaction of the parents. One could almost say that children weren't recognised as individuals.

It wasn't that parents didn't love their children, but they cared about them more for the contribution they made to the common economic task than for themselves. Moreover, the death rate of children was frightening. In Colonial America nearly one in four infants died in their first year. Almost 50% didn't live to age 10.

Except for certain courtly or elite groups, in the traditional family sexuality was always dominated by reproduction. This was a matter of tradition and nature combined. The absence of effective contraception meant that for most women sexuality was inevitably closely connected with childbirth. In many traditional cultures, including in Western Europe up to the threshold of the 20th Century, a woman might have 10 or more pregnancies during the course of her life.

Sexuality was regulated by the idea of female virtue. The sexual double standard is often thought of as a creation of the Victorian period. In fact, in one version or another it was central to almost all non-modern societies. It involved a dualistic view of female sexuality - a clear cut division between the virtuous woman on the one hand and the libertine on the other.

Sexual promiscuity in many cultures has been taken as a positive defining feature of masculinity. James Bond is, or was, admired for his sexual as well as his physical heroism. Sexually adventurous women, by contrast, have nearly always been beyond the pale, no matter how much influence the mistresses of some prominent figures might have achieved.

Attitudes towards homosexuality were also governed by a mix of tradition and nature.

Anthropological surveys show that homosexuality - or male homosexuality at any rate - has been tolerated, or openly approved of, in more cultures than it has been outlawed.

Those societies that have been hostile to homosexuality have usually condemned it as specifically unnatural. Western attitudes have been more extreme than most; less than half a century ago homosexuality was still widely regarded as a perversion and written up as such in manuals of psychiatry.

Antagonism towards homosexuality is still widespread and the dualistic view of women continues to be held by many - of both sexes. But over the past few decades the main elements of people's sexual lives in the West have changed in an absolutely basic way. The separation of sexuality from reproduction is in principle complete. Sexuality is for the first time something to be discovered, moulded, altered. Sexuality, which used to be defined so strictly in relation to marriage and legitimacy, now has little connection to them at all. We should see the increasing acceptance of homosexuality not just as a tribute to liberal tolerance. It is a logical outcome of the severance of sexuality from reproduction. Sexuality which has no content is by definition no longer dominated by heterosexuality.

What most of its defenders in Western countries call the traditional family was in fact a late, transitional phase in family development in the 1950's. This was a time at which the proportion of women out at work was still relatively low and when it was still difficult, especially for women, to obtain divorce without stigma. On the other hand, men and women by this time were more equal than they had been previously, both in fact and in law. The family had ceased to be an economic entity and the idea of romantic love as basis for marriage had replaced marriage as an economic contract.

Since then, the family has changed much further. The details vary from society to society, but the same trends are visible almost everywhere in the industrialised world. Only a minority of people now live in what might be called the standard 1950's family - both parents living together with their children of the marriage, where the mother is a full time housewife, and the father the breadwinner.

In some countries, more than a third of all births happen outside wedlock, while the proportion of people living alone has gone up steeply and looks likely to rise even more.

In most societies, like the US, marriage remains popular - the US has aptly been called a high divorce, high marriage society. In Scandinavia, on the other hand, a large proportion of people living together, including where children are involved, remain unmarried. Moreover, up to a quarter of women aged between 18 and 35 in the US and Europe say they do not intend to have children - and they appear to mean it.

Of course in all countries older family forms continue to exist. In the US, many people, recent immigrants particularly, still live according to traditional values. Most family life, however, has been transformed by the rise of the couple and coupledness. Marriage and the family have become what I termed in an earlier lecture shell institutions. They are still called the same, but inside their basic character has changed.

In the traditional family, the married couple was only one part, and often not the main part, of the family system. Ties with children and other relatives tended to be equally or even more important in the day to day conduct of social life. Today the couple, married or unmarried, is at the core of what the family is. The couple came to be at the centre of family life as the economic role of the family dwindled and love, or love plus sexual attraction, became the basis of forming marriage ties.

A couple once constituted has its own exclusive history, its own biography. It is a unit based upon emotional communication or intimacy. The idea of intimacy, like so many other familiar notions I've discussed in these lectures, sounds old but in fact is very new. Marriage was never in the past based upon intimacy - emotional communication. No doubt this was important to a good marriage but it was not the foundation of it. For the couple, it is. Communication is the means of establishing the tie in the first place and it is the chief rationale for its continuation.

We should recognise what a major transition this is. 'Coupling' and 'uncoupling' provide a more accurate description of the arena of personal life now than do 'marriage and the family'. A more important question for us than 'are you married?' is 'how good is your relationship?'

The idea of a relationship is also surprisingly recent. Only 30 or so years ago, no one spoke of 'relationships'. They didn't need to, nor did they need to speak in terms of intimacy and commitment. Marriage at that time was the commitment, as the existence of shotgun marriages bore witness. While statistically marriage is still the normal condition, for most people its meaning has more or less completely changed. Marriage signifies that a couple is in a stable relationship, and may indeed promote that stability, since it makes a public declaration of commitment. However, marriage is no longer the chief defining basis of coupledness.

The position of children in all this is interesting and somewhat paradoxical. Our attitudes towards children and their protection have altered radically over the past several generations. We prize children so much partly because they have become so much rarer, and partly because the decision to have a child is very different from what it was for previous generations. In the traditional family, children were an economic benefit. Today in Western countries a child, on the contrary, puts a large financial burden on the parents. Having a child is more of a distinct and specific decision than it used to be, and it is a decision guided by psychological and emotional needs. The worries we have about the effects of divorce upon children, and the existence of many fatherless families, have to be understood against the background of our much higher expectations about how children should be cared for and protected.

There are three main areas in which emotional communication, and therefore intimacy, are replacing the old ties that used to bind together people's personal lives - in sexual and love relations, parent child relations and in friendship.

To analyse these, I want to use the idea of what I call the 'pure relationship'. I mean by this a relationship based upon emotional communication, where the rewards derived from such communication are the main basis for the relationship to continue.

I don't mean a sexually pure relationship. Also I don't mean anything that exists in reality. I'm talking of an abstract idea that helps us understand changes going on in the world. Each of the three areas just mentioned - sexual relationships, parent-child relations and friendship - is in some way approximate to this model. Emotional communication or intimacy, in other words, are becoming the key to what they are all about.

The pure relationship has quite different dynamics from more traditional social ties. It depends upon processes of active trust - opening oneself up to the other. Self-disclosure is the basic condition of intimacy.

The pure relationship is also implicitly democratic. When I was originally working on the study of intimate relationships, I read a great deal of therapeutic and self-help literature on the subject. I was struck by something I don't believe has been widely noticed or remarked upon. If one looks at how a therapist sees a good relationship - in any of the three spheres just mentioned - it is striking how direct a parallel there is with public democracy.

A good relationship, of course, is an ideal - most ordinary relationships don't come even close. I'm not suggesting that our relations with spouses, lovers, children or friends aren't often messy, conflictful and unsatisfying. But the principles of public democracy are ideals too, that also often stand at some large distance from reality.

A good relationship is a relationship of equals, where each party has equal rights and obligations. In such a relationship, each person has respect, and wants the best, for the other. The pure relationship is based upon communication, so that understanding the other person's point of view is essential.

Talk, or dialogue, are the basis of making the relationship work. Relationships function best if people don't hide too much from each other - there has to be mutual trust. And trust has to be worked at, it can't just be taken for granted.

Finally, a good relationship is one free from arbitrary power, coercion or violence.

Every one of these qualities conforms to the values of democratic politics. In a democracy, all are in principle equal, and with equality of rights and responsibilities comes mutual respect. Open dialogue is a core property of democracy. Democratic systems substitute open discussion of issues - a public space of dialogue - for authoritarian power, or for the sedimented power of tradition. No democracy can work without trust. And democracy is undermined if it gives way to authoritarianism or violence.

When we apply these principles - as ideals, I would stress again - to relationships, we are talking of something very important - the possible emergence of what I shall call, a democracy of the emotions in everyday life. A democracy of the emotions, it seems to me, is as important as public democracy in improving the quality of our lives.

This holds as much in parent-child relations as in other areas. These can't, and shouldn't, be materially equal. Parents must have authority over children, in everyone's interests. Yet they should presume an in-principle equality. In a democratic family, the authority of parents should be based upon an implicit contract. The parent in effect says to the child: 'If you were an adult, and knew what I know, you would agree that what I ask you to do is legitimate'.

Children in traditional families were - and are - supposed to be seen and not heard. Many parents, perhaps despairing of their children's rebelliousness, would dearly like to resurrect that rule. But there isn't any going back to it, nor should there be. In a democracy of the emotions, children can and should be able to answer back.

An emotional democracy doesn't imply lack of discipline, or absence of authority. It simply seeks to put them on a different footing.

Something very similar happened in the public sphere, when democracy began to replace arbitrary government and the rule of force. And like public democracy the democratic family must be anchored in a stable, yet open, civil society. If I may coin a phrase - 'It takes a village',

A democracy of the emotions would draw no distinctions of principle between heterosexual and same-sex relationships. Gays, rather than heterosexuals, have actually been pioneers in discovering the new world of relationships and exploring its possibilities. They have had to be, because when homosexuality came out of the closet, gays weren't able to depend upon the normal supports of traditional marriage. They have had to be innovators, often in a hostile environment.

To speak of fostering an emotional democracy doesn't mean being weak about family duties, or about public policy towards the family. Democracy, after all, means the acceptance of obligations, as well as rights sanctioned in law. The protection of children has to be the primary feature of legislation and public policy. Parents should be legally obliged to provide for their children until adulthood, no matter what living arrangements they enter into. Marriage is no longer an economic institution, yet as a ritual commitment it can help stabilise otherwise fragile relationships. If this

applies to heterosexual relationships, I don't see why it shouldn't apply to homosexual ones too. There are many questions to be asked of all this - too many to answer in a short lecture. I have concentrated mainly upon trends affecting the family in Western countries. What about areas where the traditional family remains largely intact, as in the example of China with which I began? Will the changes observed in the West become more and more global?

I think they will - indeed that they are. It isn't a question of whether existing forms of the traditional family will become modified, but when and how. I would venture even further. What I have described as an emerging democracy of the emotions is on the front line in the struggle between cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism that I described in the last lecture. Equality of the sexes, and the sexual freedom of women, which are incompatible with the traditional family, are anathema to fundamentalist groups. Opposition to them, indeed, is one of the defining features of religious fundamentalism across the world.

There is plenty to be worried about in the state of the family, in Western countries and elsewhere. It is just as mistaken to say that every family form is as good as any other, as to argue that the decline of the traditional family is a disaster.

I would turn the argument of the political and fundamentalist right on its head. The persistence of the traditional family - or aspects of it - in many parts of the world is more worrisome than its decline. For what are the most important forces promoting democracy and economic development in poorer countries? Well, they are the equality and education of women. And what must be changed to make these possible? Most importantly, what must be changed is the traditional family. In conclusion, I should emphasise that sexual equality is not just a core principle of democracy. It is also relevant to happiness and fulfilment.

Many of the changes happening to the family are problematic and difficult. But surveys in the US and Europe show that few want to go back to traditional male and female roles, much less to legally defined inequality.

If ever I were tempted to think that the traditional family might be best after all, I remember what my great aunt said. She must have had one of the longest marriages of anyone. She married young, and was with her husband for over 60 years. She once confided to me that she had been deeply unhappy with him the whole of that time. In her day there was no escape.

Lecture 5

Democracy - London

On November 9th, 1989, I was in Berlin - in what was then West Germany. At the meeting I had come to take part in, some of those present were from East Berlin. One such person, who was away that afternoon, later came back in a state of some excitement. He had been in the East, and was told that the Berlin Wall was on the point of being opened.

A small group of us got down there very quickly. Ladders were being put against it and we started to climb up. But we were pushed back by television crews who had just arrived on the scene. They had to go up first, they said, so that they could film us scaling the ladders and arriving at the top. They even persuaded some people to go back down and climb up twice, to make sure they had good TV footage.

Thus is history made in the closing years of the 20th Century. Television not only gets there first, it stages the spectacle. In a way, as I shall go on to argue, the TV crews had the right to push themselves to the front. For television had an important role in making the opening of the wall happen, as it did more generally in the transformations of 1989 in Eastern Europe. The driving force of the 1989 revolutions was democracy or self-rule. And the spread of democracy in the recent period has been strongly influenced by the advance of global communications.

Democracy is perhaps the most powerful energising idea of the 20th Century. There are few states in the world today that don't call themselves democratic. The Soviet Union and its East European dependencies called themselves 'people's democracies', as communist China continues to do.

Virtually the only countries that are explicitly non-democratic are the last remaining semi-feudal states like Saudi Arabia - and even these are hardly untouched by democratic currents.

What is democracy? The issue is a contentious one, and many different interpretations have been offered. I shall mean by it the following. Democracy is a system involving effective competition between political parties for positions of power. In a democracy, there are regular and fair elections, in which all members of the population may take part. These rights of democratic participation go along with civil liberties - freedom of expression and discussion, together with the freedom to form and join political groups or associations.

Democracy isn't an all or nothing thing. There can be different forms, as well as different levels, of democratisation. Democracy in Britain and the United States, for instance, isn't all of a piece. A British traveller in the US once enquired of an American companion: 'how can you bear to be governed by people you wouldn't dream of inviting to dinner?' to which the American replied, 'how can you bear to be governed by people who wouldn't dream of inviting you to dinner? More or less everyone is a democrat now, but it certainly wasn't always so. Democratic ideas were fiercely resisted by established elites and ruling groups in the 19th Century, and often treated with derision. Democracy was the inspiring ideal of the American and French revolutions, but for a long while its hold was limited. Only a minority of the population had the vote. Even some of the most fervent advocates of democratic government, such as the philosopher John Stuart Mill, argued that limitations should be imposed on it. Mill recommended that some of the electorate should have more votes than others, so that in his words, the 'wiser and talented' have more influence than the 'ignorant and less able'.

Democracy in the West only became fully developed in the current century. Before the First World War, women had the right to vote in only four countries - Finland, Norway, Australia and New Zealand. They didn't get the vote in Switzerland until as late as 1974. Moreover, some countries that became fully democratic later experienced relapses. Germany, Italy, Austria, Spain and Portugal all had periods of authoritarian rule or military dictatorship during the period from the 1930's to the 1970's. Outside Europe, North America and Australasia, there have only been a small number of long-standing democracies, such as Costa Rica in Latin America.

Over the past few decades, however, much of this has changed, and in a remarkable way. Since the mid-1970s, the number of democratic governments in the world has more than doubled. Democracy has spread to over thirty more countries, while all the existing democratic states have kept democratic institutions in place. These changes began in Mediterranean Europe, with the overthrow of the military regimes in Greece, Spain and Portugal. The second group of countries where democracy spread - this time mainly in the early 1980s, was in South and Central America. Some twelve countries established or re-established democratic government, including Brazil, Peru and Argentina.

The story continues across all continents. The transition to democracy post 1989 in Eastern Europe, and parts of the ex Soviet Union, was followed in a number of countries in Africa. In Asia, with some problems and reversals, democratisation has been going on over the whole period since the early 1970s - in South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Thailand and Mongolia. India has remained a democratic state since its independence in 1947.

Of course, some states making the transition to democracy fall short of full democratisation, or appear to have stalled along the way. Russia is only one of many examples. Others are simply putting back what existed before. Argentina, and some other Latin American countries, have had democratic government previously, as have the Czech Republic, or Poland in Eastern Europe. Since democratic governments have in Eastern Europe often been overthrown, we can't be sure how permanent any of these democratic transitions will be. Yet democracy has made nearly as much advance during the past thirty years as it did over more than a whole century before that. Why? One possible answer is offered by those who take a triumphalist view of the Western combination of democracy and free markets. This is that other systems have been tried and have failed. Democracy has come out top because it is best. It simply took most countries outside the Western ambit some while to recognise this.

I wouldn't dispute part of the argument. Democracy is best. But as an account of the recent waves of democratisation, it is hardly adequate. It doesn't explain why such changes should happen at this juncture in history.

To get a better explanation, we need to resolve what I shall call the paradox of democracy. The paradox of democracy is this. On the one hand, democracy is spreading over the world, as I have just described. Yet in the mature democracies, which the rest of the world is supposed to be copying, there is widespread disillusionment with democratic processes. In most Western countries, levels of trust in politicians have dropped over past years. Fewer people turn out to vote than used to, particularly in the US. More and more people say that they are uninterested in parliamentary politics, especially among the younger generation. Why are citizens in democratic countries apparently becoming disillusioned with democratic government, at the same time as it is spreading around the rest of the world?

The changes I have been analysing throughout these lectures explain why. For increasing numbers across the world, life is no longer lived as fate - as relatively fixed and determined - authoritarian government becomes out of line with other life experiences, including the flexibility and dynamism necessary to compete in the global electronic economy. Political power based upon authoritarian command can no longer draw upon reserves of traditional deference, or respect.

In a world based upon active communication, hard power - power that comes only from the top down - loses its edge. The economic conditions that the Soviet Union couldn't handle - the need for decentralisation and flexibility - were mirrored in politics. Information monopoly, upon which the political system was based, has no future in an intrinsically open framework of global communications.

In the East European events of 1989, large numbers of people took to the streets. But - unlike almost any other revolution in history - there was remarkably little violence. What seemed a system of implacable power - Communist totalitarianism - faded away as though it had hardly existed. Few thought apartheid in South Africa could disappear without being forcibly overthrown. But it did. The only episodes of violence that occurred in 1989 were involved in the seizure of television stations. Those who invaded them got their priorities right. The communications revolution has produced more active, reflexive citizenries than existed before. It is these very developments that are at the same time producing disaffection in the long-established democracies. In a detraditionalising

world, politicians can't rely upon the old forms of pomp and circumstance to justify what they do. Orthodox parliamentary politics becomes remote from the flood of change sweeping through people's lives.

Where does this leave democracy itself? Should we accept that democratic institutions are becoming marginal just at the point where democracy seems on a roll?

Some very interesting findings are revealed in the opinion polls carried out in different Western countries about trust in government. People have indeed lost a good deal of the trust they used to have in politicians and orthodox democratic procedures. They haven't lost their faith, however, in democratic processes. In a recent survey in the US and the major West European countries, well over 90% of the population said they approved of democratic government. Moreover, contrary to what many assume, most people aren't becoming uninterested in politics as such. The findings actually show the reverse. People are more interested in politics than they used to be. This includes the younger generation. Younger people are not, as has so often been said a generation X, disaffected and alienated.

What they are, or many of them are, is more cynical about the claims politicians make and concerned about questions that they feel politicians have little to say about. Many regard politics as a corrupt business, in which political leaders are self-interested, rather than having the good of their citizens at heart. Younger people see issues such as ecological questions, human rights, family policy and sexual freedom as most important. On an economic level, they don't believe that politicians are able to deal with the forces moving the world. As everyone understands, many of these go beyond the level of the nation state. It isn't surprising that activists should choose to put their energies into special interest groups, since these promise what orthodox politics seems unable to deliver.

How can democracy and active government be sustained when they seem to have lost their purchase on events? I think there are answers. What is needed in the democratic countries is a deepening of democracy itself. I shall call this democratising democracy. But democracy today must also become transnational. We need to democratise above the level of the nation. A globalising era demands global responses, and this applies to politics just as much as any other area.

A deepening of democracy is required, because the old mechanisms of government don't work in a society where citizens live in the same information environment as those in power over them.

Western democratic governments, of course, have never been as secretive as communist states or other types of authoritarian government. Yet secretive in some contexts they certainly have been. Think, for example, of how much was concealed by the US and British governments in the cold war period about nuclear testing and weapons development. Western democratic systems have also involved old-boy networks, political patronage and back stage deals. They frequently make use of traditional symbolism, and traditional forms of power, that are less than wholly democratic. The House of Lords in the UK is only one of the most obvious of such examples. As traditions lose their grip, what once seemed venerable, and worthy of respect, almost overnight can come to appear quaint, or even ridiculous.

It was not by accident there have been so many corruption scandals in politics around the world in the past few years. From Japan to Germany, France and the US to the UK, corruption cases have made the news. I doubt that corruption is more common in democratic countries than it used to be. Rather, in an open information society it is more visible, and the boundaries of what counts as corruption have shifted. In Britain, for example, the old boy network in the past was simply the way in which things were done, even when left of centre parties were in power. Such networks have hardly disappeared, but much of what used to happen through them, and be widely accepted, is now defined as illegitimate.

The democratising of democracy will take different forms in different countries, depending on their background. But there isn't any country so advanced that it is exempt. Democratising democracy means having an effective devolution of power, where - as in Britain - power is still strongly concentrated at the national level. It means having effective anti-corruption measures at all levels. It often implies constitutional reform, and the promotion of greater transparency in political affairs. We should also be prepared to experiment with alternative democratic procedures, especially when these might help bring political decision-making close to the everyday concerns of citizens. Peoples'

juries, for example, or electronic referenda, won't replace representative democracy, but they can be a useful complement to it.

Political parties will have to get more used to collaborating with single issue groups, such as ecological pressure groups, than they have in the past. Some people see contemporary societies as fragmented and disorganised, but in fact the opposite is true. People are getting more involved in groups and associations than they used to. In Britain, 20 times more people belong to voluntary or self-help groups than are members of political parties, and much the same is true of other countries. Single issue groups are often at the forefront in raising problems and questions that may go ignored in orthodox political circles until too late. Thus well before the BSE crisis in the UK groups and movements had been warning about the dangers of contamination in the food chain. The democratising of democracy also depends upon the fostering of a strong civic culture. This is absolutely central. Markets cannot produce such a culture. Nor can a pluralism of special interest groups. We shouldn't think of there being only two sectors of society, the state and the marketplace - or the public and the private. In between is the area of civil society, including the family and other non-economic institutions. Building a democracy of the emotions, of which I spoke last time, is one part of a progressive civic culture. Civil society is the arena in which democratic attitudes, including tolerance, have to be developed. The civic sphere can be fostered by government, but is in its turn its cultural basis.

The democratising of democracy isn't relevant only to the mature democracies. It can help build democratic institutions where they are weak and undernourished. In Russia, for instance, where gangster capitalism is rife, and strong authoritarian overtones persist from the past, a more open and democratic society can't be built in only a top down manner. It has to be constructed bottom up, through a revival of civic culture. Replacing state control with markets, even if they were more stable than they are, wouldn't achieve this end. A well-functioning democracy has been aptly compared to a three-legged stool. Government, the economy and civil society need to be in balance. If one dominates over the others, unfortunate consequences follow. In the former Soviet Union, the state dominated most areas of life. Hence, there wasn't an energetic economy and civil society was all but killed off.

We can't leave the media out of this equation. The media, particularly television, have a double relation to democracy. On the one hand, as I have stressed, the emergence of a global information society, is a powerful democratising force. Yet television, and the other media, tend to destroy the very public space of dialogue they open up, through a relentless trivialising, and personalising, of political issues. Moreover, the growth of giant multinational media corporations means that unelected business tycoons can hold enormous power.

Countering such power can't be a matter of national policy alone. Crucially, the democratising of democracy can't stop at the level of the nation state. As practised up to now, democratic politics has presumed a national community that is self-governing and able to shape most of the policies that concern it. It has presumed the sovereign nation. But under the impact of globalisation, sovereignty has become fuzzy. Nations and nation-states remain powerful, but there are large democratic deficits opening up - as the political scientist, David Held points out - between them and the global forces that affect the lives of their citizens. Environmental risks, fluctuations in the global economy, or global technological change, do not respect the borders of nations. They escape democratic process - one of the main reasons, as I said earlier, for the declining appeal of democracy where it is best established.

Talk of democracy above the level of the nation might seem quite unrealistic. Such ideas, after all, were widely spoken of a hundred years ago. Instead of an era of global harmony, there arrived two world wars, more than a hundred million people have been killed in warfare during this century.

Are circumstances different now? Obviously no one can say for sure, but I believe they are. I have given the reasons why in earlier lectures. The world is much more interdependent than it was a century ago, and the nature of world society has changed. As a reverse side of the coin, the shared problems we face today - such as global ecological risks - are also much greater.

How might democracy be fostered above the level of the nation-state? I would look to the transnational organisations as much as to the international ones. The United Nations, as its very name indicates, is an association of nation states. For the moment at least, it rarely challenges the

sovereignty of nations, and indeed its charter asserts that it should not do so. The European Union is different. I would see it as forging a way that could, and very likely will, be followed in other regions too. What is important about the EU isn't that it is located in Europe, but that it is pioneering a form of transnational governance. Contrary to what some of its supporters, and its critics say, it is not a federal state or a super nation-state. But nor is it merely an association of nations. The countries that have entered the EU have voluntarily given up some of their sovereignty in order to do so.

Now the European Union isn't itself particularly democratic. It has famously been said of the EU that if it applied to join itself, it wouldn't get in. The EU doesn't meet the democratic criteria it demands of its members. Yet there is nothing in principle that prevents its further democratisation and we should press hard for such change.

The existence of the EU drives home a cardinal principle of democracy, when seen against the background of the global order. This is that the transnational system can actively contribute democracy within states, as well as between them. The European courts, for example, have made a range of decisions, including measures protecting individual rights that hold within the member countries. As we look round the globe, at the end of the 20th Century, we can see cause for optimism and pessimism in about equal measure. The expansion of democracy is a case in point. On the face of it, democracy seems a fragile flower. In spite of its spread, oppressive regimes abound, while human rights are routinely flouted in states around the world. In Kosovo, that unfolding tragedy, hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes, and all pretence of the rule of law abandoned. I would like to quote some words here, from a reporter on the spot: 'nearly half a million refugees' he says, are in Macedonia now. How they are to be fed, nobody knows ... Come over into Macedonia and help us!' This was published in the Toronto Daily Star. The reporter was Ernest Hemingway, the date - October 20, 1922. One might be forgiven for thinking that some problems are simply intractable, without hope of resolution.

Democracy might appear to flourish only in especially fertile soil, which has been cultivated in the long term. In societies, or regions, that have little history of democratic government, democracy seems to have shallow roots and is easily swept away.

Yet perhaps all this is changing. Rather than thinking of democracy as a fragile flower, easily trampled underfoot, perhaps we should see it more as a sturdy plant, able to grow even on quite barren ground. If my argument is correct, the expansion of democracy is bound up with structural changes in world society. Nothing comes without struggle. But the furthering of democracy at all levels is worth fighting for and it can be achieved. Our runaway world doesn't need less, but more government - and this, only democratic institutions can provide.