
In this book, Todd returns to the by now well-known thesis that the inheritance laws of agrarian societies have important consequences for present-day industrial nations. There are some peoples—like the Arabs, French, Romans, Russians, and Spaniards—where family systems are symmetrical.
in the sense that all sons inherit an equal part of the
land, and there are other peoples—like the
Basques, Germans, Greeks, Israelis, Japanese,
and Sikhs—where one person is the prime
inheritor. The English are classified as having an
asymmetrical family system, since persons have the
liberty to bequest their inheritance as they see fit.
These differences foster, so maintains Todd in the
first chapter of the present book, distinct views of
the nature of the human species. A symmetrical
system tells the unconscious that if brothers within
a family are equal, all the members of a nation are
equal and all peoples of the world too (p. 24).
Indeed, the more children are treated unequally, the
more the view of the human species is not one of
simple dissimilarities, but of inferiority and
superiority. According to Todd, the recent
abolition of unequal inheritance laws in certain
countries, has not eliminated the differentialist view
of the human species. Parents still transmit this
view by treating children unequally with respect to
education. Todd adds that a comparative study of
the school level attained by oldest sons compared
with the level achieved by their brothers and sisters
is not available (p. 35).

In the other chapters of this book, Todd explains
the degree of separation of immigrants from the
established population in the United States
(Chapters 2–5), England (Chapter 6), Germany
(Chapters 7 and 8), and France (Chapters 9–12) by
way of the inequalities stipulated in inheritance
laws and the views of the human species they foster.
These chapters turn Todd’s intriguing ideas into
testable hypotheses by assuming that the extent of
intermarriage furnishes a good indication of the
degree of separation or assimilation, and by
scavenging the existing sociological literature for
empirical information on the extent of various
types of intermarriage. It must be said that the way
the anthropologist and historian Todd treats these
statistics is not up to the standards of the
sociological literature he quotes. In fact, Todd
remains unconscious of the fact that a higher
percentage of intermarriage for a group may be the
simple results of its smallness in numbers.

In the chapter on the segregation of Blacks
and Whites Todd points out that nowadays, some
25 years after the Supreme Court declared
unconstitutional state laws forbidding inter­
marriage of Blacks and Whites, the percentage of
Black–White marriages still is extremely low. Todd
takes this finding as supporting his hypothesis of
differentialism in the United States. He then
discounts measures aiming at equal rights for
Blacks. When dealing with the abolition of slavery,
Todd maintains that at the unconscious level, the
abolitionists were against slavery because slavery
couraged sexual intercourse between Blacks and
Whites. It is a pity that in this chapter he does not
distinguish the Whites of the United States according
to inheritance laws in their nation of origin. Are
Italian Americans, stemming from a tradition of
equal inheritance, more likely to marry Blacks than
Swedish Americans, with their tradition of unequal
inheritance? And why were Jewish Americans, with
laws favouring the eldest son, prominent in the fight
for equal rights for Blacks?

The chapter just discussed is not the only one
that turns into an attempt to explain away evidence
that speaks against Todd’s main thesis. In the
chapter on England, Todd makes clear that the
recent migration of Black Caribbeans to England
has been accompanied by more Black–White
intermarriages than are found in the United
States. However, Todd is not surprised. The
strong class differentialism of the industrial
revolution blocks the development of a racial
differentialism: a sufficient number of individuals
are liberated by their working-class identity from
their White identity. The view of racial
differentialism is there: the Labour Party accepted
the view of irreducible differences between human
beings by defining in one of its party programmes
integration not as assimilation but as equal
opportunity and tolerance of cultural diversity.

Because asymmetry in the German family is
much stronger than in the English family, the idea
of racial differences in Germany did not depend
only on skin colour, an external characteristic. It
also included the view that there are human beings
with an interior that is inferior to that of other
human beings. As in earlier chapters, Todd takes
examples from all over. It gradually becomes clear
that the present book could do with a proper
method for ascertaining the prevalence of specific
views on the nature of humanity, just as, when
studying the world-views of various brands of
Protestantism, the sociologist Weber limited
himself to a content analysis of books on the cure
of souls.

Although sufficient data are available, Todd
does not describe the trend in Jewish–Gentile
intermarriage in Germany before the Second
World War. Most attention is paid to trends in
intermarriage in recent decades between Germans
and Turks and between Germans and Yugoslavs.
According to Todd, Turkey embraced
modernization more than Yugoslavia, but
Germany is assimilating the Yugoslavs faster than the Turks. About 80 per cent of Yugoslavs now marry Germans, whereas for Turks the figure is close to 10 per cent. This would be expected, since Turkey has an asymmetrical family system and Yugoslavia a symmetrical one.

France is the only country treated extensively by Todd that has accepted, in his own words, a principle of equality into its anthropological structures. However, universalism does not cover the whole of France, since the equal treatment of sons upon the death of their father was limited to the Paris basin. Todd maintains that French universalism was slow to be adopted by other European countries (p. 200). He explores the question of the extent to which blood-shedding in France shortly after the declaration of human rights and Napoleon’s somewhat later empire-building contributed to this.

According to Todd, assimilation of Jews went further in France than in England or the United States and much further than in Germany. A comparison of Goldstein’s figures for the United States with those of Bensimon and Della Pergola for France (p. 258), shows that in around 1970 in France Jewish–Gentile intermarriage was more common than in the United States. Todd does not cite the well-known figures for intermarriage in Germany in the interbellum. Without watering Todd’s hypothesis down, they just do not fit.

In contrast to Todd, assimilation of Jews went further in France than in England or the United States and much further than in Germany. A comparison of Goldstein’s figures for the United States with those of Bensimon and Della Pergola for France (p. 258), shows that in around 1970 in France Jewish–Gentile intermarriage was more common than in the United States. Todd does not cite the well-known figures for intermarriage in Germany in the interbellum. Without watering Todd’s hypothesis down, they just do not fit.

In contrast to the North American School (Todd’s words, at p. 266) consisting of Hyman, Marrus, and Paxton, Todd does not regard the Dreyfus Affair and Vichy as indicating that the emancipation of French Jews had failed. These phenomena show that outside the Paris basin, universalism in France had weak roots. Todd buttresses this assertion by referring to a content analysis of the national and regional press by Janine Ponty on the revision of Dreyfus’s conviction. The fact that 25 per cent of French Jews did not survive the Second World War, a percentage much lower than that for Belgium and the Netherlands (p. 273), is taken as telling in favour of French universalism under Vichy.

As to contemporary France, Todd presents figures showing that intermarriage between Algerians and French persons in France is much more prevalent than intermarriage between Turks and Germans in Germany (p. 305). According to Todd, these differences cannot be explained fully by postulating that Algeria is francophone and that Turkey lacks a strong German influence. No further evidence for this assertion is adduced. A high correlation between the proportion of Maghreb persons in a French province and the percentage of votes for the extreme right is discussed. An analysis of residuals shows that in the provinces of the Paris basin the vote for the extreme right is lower than expected on the basis of the percentage of persons from the Maghreb. In these provinces out-marriage is more widespread too. This analysis (pp. 309–12) is reported so briefly that it is difficult to follow.

Todd finishes the present book by maintaining that French society has a false consciousness of itself when it stresses the high percentage of votes for the extreme right; he also argues against what he takes to be an empty notion of a European identity. I would like to conclude this review by stating that the author of the present study sometimes forgets the Austrian–English principles of searching for counter-instances to hypotheses. Because of its strong tendency to make the facts fit better than they do, the book under review sometimes reads as a perhaps unconscious, but to an outsider all too obvious, attempt to legitimate the grandeur de la France. However, the book addresses a worthwhile and neglected question, presents a bold hypothesis—the idea of an unconscious is not necessary to it—and treats it in a comparative fashion. It therefore deserves the critical attention of European sociologists.

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