

BEYOND THE CIRCLE OF VIOLENCE AND PROGRESS

Ethics and Material Development in Transnational Perspective

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AND PROGRESS

*Ethics and Material Development in
Transnational Perspective*

INDIA AND EGYPT FROM THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE
TO THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (1881-1970)

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
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I dedicate this book to Denise, a young girl who I knew in eastern Turkey, who showed amazing intellectual and creative promise, but whose life was tragically and needlessly cut short by a house fire under conditions of economic and political oppression.

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Introduction

Marc Bloch's historical theory of the *longue durée*, on the level of the history of ideas, envisions a prolonged and polyvocal dialogue between the past and the present. Writing the history of political thought should be a broad and interdisciplinary area of study that can include social history, intellectual history, and also literary history. We want to create a methodology for the history of ideas that does not isolate thought a-historically, as with the ideas printed in books, and sundered from the sociological and historical embeddedness that gave them meaning. We should include not only the writings of intellectuals but also the ideas produced by social movements and expressed through institutions such as parliaments, political parties and labour unions. It should include many different voices, of those marginalised and sometimes erased by the dominant power structure. Once we begin to examine the social and historical space that gave meaning to political thought, we recognize that it is a transnational space. We choose, in this work, to extract and retrieve the meaning of the "scientific temper" from the Nehru period. Even within a telescoped framework, we find the "scientific temper" reflected in its regularly conflicting meanings and values the many usages stemming from its multiple sources in public activism, of insurgency, of state-building, and of developmental practice.

Following Bloch's methodology, a history of ideas is most fruitfully undertaken from a comparative perspective. To capture

the dialectical tension of the term “scientific temper”, we investigate it in terms of a movement which rallies a common banner while being internally heterogeneous and contradictory: the Non-Aligned Movement, a cosmopolitan vision of a unified human destiny beyond the circle of violence and progress, or capitalism. The “scientific temper” was articulated in multiple inchoate framings in the diverse visions of Ottoman governor Mohammad Ali, Prime Minister Ahmed ‘Urabi, activist Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, and writer Taha Hussein in the Egyptian context, and by writers-activists Rabindranath Tagore, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Muhammad Iqbal, and Ahmed Ali in the Indian context, long before being distilled into the core concept of Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Discovery of India* and the ideological underpinning of his democratic experiment in newly independent India. The multiple articulations of the “scientific temper” provided alternative currents in the history of political thought, and Gamal Abdel Nasser, following the Free Officer coup, also employed one variant on the concept to justify a new secular military authority in the wake of colonial occupation. A concept like the “scientific temper” is to be studied as part of the history of power, including its circulatory relation to emerging institutions, the conduct of affairs, and ways of thinking and acting politically.

We find that the idea of the “scientific temper” did not simply reflect political forces. It came to have its own autonomy, because it essentially articulated a problem combining certain antinomies between political, economic, ideological and military power. The varied possible understandings of these antinomies translated, in practice, into real alternative paths in nation-making. The real focus of this investigation is explaining the path-breaking specificity of the Indian post-colonial nation-making path, in terms of establishing civilian power and multi-cultural democracy, and the examination of the Egyptian experience – in its parallels and divergences – makes this possible. The concept, the circle of violence and progress, is the indispensable structural ground – in the nature and logic

of capitalism – for understanding any of the many conjunctural expressions of the term “scientific temper”. For the contemporary historian of ideas, much of the problematic hinges on understanding how and why capitalism – and the myriad emergent institutions related to it – behaved differently in the context of what Frantz Fanon defined at length as “colonial societies” in the *Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Chapter One: What is Power?

The first section deals with comparative methodologies. There are two prevailing methodologies for understanding power that are tacit in the social sciences today. Because the roots of these two traditions often remain unexamined and their usage a matter of routine, there is a tendency to overlook the fact that the two methodologies are fundamentally irreconcilable. If we strip back the contemporary literature to its tacit foundations, at least the spectrum contained in this book, there are sociological and deconstructive methods. Before any scholar can even begin to examine path-breaking events like the Urabi revolution or the Swadeshi movement, the struggles of a man like Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the Nasserite or the Nehru experiences, they will necessarily confront these two methodological postures in their varying forms.

The sociological method views power in terms of representations, it is objectively quantified, such that we might undertake its redistribution – political power through expanding the franchise among greater parts of the population, or economic power in transforming the structure of property as through land reform, heavy graduated income tax, the abolition of certain classes, or the empowerment of traditionally subordinated classes or groups through access to education and new job markets. It follows from these examples that the state-law complex has a central role in defining and distributing power. This representative concept of

power is conventionally linked to the concept of justice and the legal rights framework. We find this understanding of power – in very diverse ways - tacitly underlying the writings of John Locke, Karl Marx, Noam Chomsky, Amartya Sen, Frantz Fanon, and Michael Mann. The targets of criticism from this methodological perspective may include capitalism or the state, that is, abuses of power as the result of any instance of excessive power concentration within a single institution or among a single group.

There is also a second methodology for understanding power, notably traceable to Friedrich Nietzsche, in the deconstructive method. It favours the usurpation of epistemology by ontology, that is, knowing by being. This method rejects the possibility of representing power sociologically because it rejects modern science as a valid arbiter of life in general. Its target is not the concentration of power within institutions but the scientific worldview itself. Power is not merely a concept devised by scientific representation to measure the distribution of power, and possibly amend it through law and institutionalised reform. Power is equated in a wider sense with culture as the true shaper of human experience and destiny within a community. The cultural concept of power targets modernity, which is a cultural framework professing to universal objectivity and thereby denying the specific truth claims of a diversity of independently existing cultures. Power is understood as problematic only when it is linked to the concept of scientific representation. Because the deconstructive method rejects modernity as the embodiment of universalism, it therefore also rejects the concept of justice and the related legal rights framework because of their close association with this very term. This tendency is exemplified – again, in widely differing ways - in Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, in the Subaltern school, and post-colonial scholarship in its diverse forms including post-development theory and the writings of Timothy Mitchell on Egypt.

These two methodologies surface from the shipwreck of the 20th century Cold War. The first section of this book presents an

exemplary case of a French Marxist who, disillusioned with the Soviet Union, embraced a Nietzschean methodology via Foucault as an influential new source of Left politics in which the aim ceases to be traditionally conceived justice, and becomes the establishment of a unifying cultural paradigm. It is the aesthetic notion of a set of unifying values and beliefs that knit together a community into an existentially meaningful purpose. From this Nietzschean perspective, the Enlightenment – and not capitalism – becomes the core target of criticism. The defining categories become authenticity and inauthenticity. This has considerable implications for how we understand concepts like the nation and Eurocentrism, as subsets of the problem of power.

One of the major errors spreading confusion in the methodology of the social sciences today is the idea that one can simultaneously employ a Marxian and a Heideggerian methodology. Upon careful examination, these two methodologies are incompatible. They deal in categories that cannot be reconciled. Marxian methodology remains within the social scientific frame of epistemology. Heideggerianism constitutes the rejection of social science methodology, or the rejection of epistemology in favour of ontology. The opening methodological section demonstrates this thesis through an examination of the following cases: Arturo Escobar and the post-development school, which uses the metaphor of “implantation” and “disease” to criticise modernity; Ranajit Guha and the Subaltern school, which enshrines a violence-sacred-purification triangle; and the game changing writings of Partha Chatterjee on the nation in colonial contexts. Chatterjee shows the most exemplary case of a sophisticated attempt to methodologically braid together Marx and Heidegger, and represents a tradition of thought that has advanced the fiercest criticism of the Nehruvian “scientific temper”.

These deconstructive interventions have been deeply influential and therefore require careful critical examination. What we find, however, is that the deconstructive methodology shifts us away

from clearly seeing the circle of violence and progress. We require a sociological optic to understand the basic logic of capitalism, which is the circle of violence and progress. Once we adopt the culturalist view, our clear sight of capitalism yields to a mythic construction of modernity that is – upon examination – devoid of serious meaning. This book argues for the sociological concept of power, indebted to Marx, and considers the Heideggerian methodology to be the source of a self-defeating illusion in contemporary scholarship on all issues – the nation, empire, political party, or Eurocentrism – concerned with understanding power. We sometimes hear that Liberalism excessively discusses norms, laws, and other idealised topics while ignoring the realities of power. In fact, those scholars who frequently invoke the term “power” need to put themselves through rigorous self-examination. This critical task is part of a larger project of critically reconstructing the Left tradition, which is crucial today if it is not to become irrelevant and impotent through its own dogmatic blindness and state of denial. It is the self-defeating illusion of perfectibility that has bedevilled the Left, a utopia that has justified its worst atrocities and discredited too many Left regimes ethically. This too is absolutely an issue of misconceiving the real nature of power. We need a radical Left with a realistic understanding of human possibility, that is to say, power, which means a deep reconstructive criticism of the foundations underpinning the tradition. Only then will the aims of the Left become genuinely viable.

Since the fall of Soviet socialism, the concept of civil society has rightfully become a central notion in methodologies designed for understanding political change in modern societies everywhere. However, we have singularly failed to make the term civil society suitable to the specificities of what Frantz Fanon called “colonial societies”. In fact, Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* (1961) was the beginning of a profound rethinking of the conceptual foundations of any understanding of the civil society as a meaningful concept in colonial societies. This promising methodological beginning was

unfortunately drowned in the deluge of Heideggerian reconstructive methodology – usually dismissing the concept of civil society as “inauthentic” - that swamped the social sciences in its efforts to understand power with a view to radically altering power relations in the world. On the other side of the debate on civil society, we find Amartya Sen and Meera Nanda as strong defenders of the “scientific temper”. As we will see, both of them have advanced theories centring a multi-axial understanding of civil society that transcends the limits of traditionally more Eurocentric conceptions of civil society. This is encapsulated in Sen’s theory of “capabilities”. The key concepts defining their work show a remarkable relatedness to innovative ideas on civil society articulated by Rabindranath Tagore and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, both – from their very different perspectives - principal exponents of the concept of the “scientific temper”.

Chapter Two: Defining an Event Constellation

Understanding the nature of civil society in colonial societies requires an international relations template, which is a representative concept of power that is the antithesis of the Heideggerian romanticisation of the cultural fragment. Anti-colonial national movements require embeddedness in what Thomas Piketty has called the “history of equality”. The core purpose of the book is the retrieval of the meaning of the so-called Nehruvian “scientific temper” within a larger transnational context of circuits that explain how the term was deployed in a wide variety of ways in diverse contexts. This interpretation of the Nehruvian “scientific temper” corresponds to the principal innovation of the Structuralist revolution, which teaches us that meaning and value are in every case defined by difference within an interplay of structure and conjuncture. That is, the beginning of any successful retrieval of the meaning of a historical concept

like the “scientific temper” requires the mapping out of a pertinent event constellation.

To explain the “scientific temper”, at the base, we take recourse to an obscure early 20th century debate between the Hungarian philosopher of science Michael Polanyi and the Kremlin theoretician Nicolai Bukharin in the USSR in 1935. Polanyi subsequently described this debate in terms of the autonomy of science, but it holds a distinctive elective affinity with the Nehruvian “scientific temper”. The core stakes are identical: it is the concrete issue of human freedom within the second circle of violence and progress, embodied in the Soviet experience, within the larger circle of violence and progress that is capitalism. In that debate, Polanyi articulated a specific concept of a multi-axial civil society that predated the revival of the civil society concept that followed the velvet revolutions. Polanyi’s theory of “conviviality” is at once illuminating while also masking the deeper reality of capitalism behind a celebration of pluralism in the non-state space of self-organising entities such as trade unions, political parties, media, etc.

In the section following the autonomy of science debate, the meaning of the two circles of violence and progress is defined as the structural precondition for Polanyi’s seminal multi-axial theory of civil society, the obscured reality of capitalism as the real basis for any discussion of challenges facing us as social science scholars. This discussion of the second circle of violence and progress requires close analysis of the one-party legacy of the USSR, which is assessed through the experience of diverse sub-Saharan African countries whose post-independence pattern – in the predominance of military over other sources of social power – in many ways corresponds to that of Egypt under Nasser. At a broader transnational level, a conjunctural space is articulated to provide the context for discussing the Indian and Egyptian anti- and post-colonial experiences within a synchronic slice of 20th century time, a revolutionary constellation of four interconnected moments:

the Russian Revolution (1917), the Turkish Independence War (1919-23), the Egyptian Revolution (1919), and the Indian Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22). By discussing the emergent meaning of citizenship in these contexts we provincialize the Soviet experience that is normally taken as a revolutionary pinnacle, that is, in the serial summits of Left achievement within the “history of equality” from 1789 to 1917. This is a crucial step if we are to subvert the still pervasive paradigm of Eurocentrism and discover a more realistic picture of the world.

If we want to understand the structural legacy of capitalism at the transnational level, we require a conjunctural explanation that grasps how capitalism was revolutionised by the shock of the World War I experience in a major spur for the “history of equality”. Meanwhile, the Bretton Woods conjuncture (1944-1971) also revealed the deeper structural logic of capitalism persisting in a global division of labour reasserting itself following the colonial pattern. As we retrospectively examine the methodologies that emerged in the 20th century to explain the structural-conjunctural interaction of the circle of violence and progress, we find that Karl Polanyi (the brother of Michael Polanyi) most successfully achieved the needed middle way between the multi-axial focus on civil society dynamisms and the determinism of a reductive base-superstructure construct that centred the logic of capitalism while hopelessly simplifying the societies it was intended to describe. The middle way that Polanyi achieved was a variant on the phenomenological concept of the “lifeworld”. For the sake of methodological clarity, it is necessary to differentiate Polanyi’s sociological lifeworld from the roughly contemporary and superficially comparable Heideggerian counterpart in “being”. By studying Polanyi’s lifeworld, basic ethical questions are raised. These centre the question of human freedom in modern societies caught within the circle of violence and progress. We discover a strict correlation between Polanyi and Sen in the idea of “capabilities”, an ethical concept that exposes the need to take

with equal seriousness both social and political rights as a mutually reinforcing double construct.

We find that Polanyi's theory of self-protection, in which capitalist penetration invariably involves a counter-movement, provides a model capable of explaining the conjunctural moment of the regime of capital at its onset anywhere. Sen's "capabilities" provide an ethical theory that provides everyday substance for Polanyi's "double movement", in medicine, food, shelter, and other features of the universal material resources for sustaining everyday life in human societies anywhere. We find that the lifeworld, as conceived by Polanyi, then elaborated more deeply by Sen, and theorised in international relations terms in Michael Mann's theory of the four sources of social power, is the crowning achievement of the 20th century Structuralist Revolution. This provides the methodological basis for rethinking the scholarly legacy of the Left beyond the distortions and tragic errors imposed by the failed totalitarian experiments of the USSR in the 20th century. By tracing the alternate configurations of Mann's sources of social power, we see that every case of a transition from a national movement to an independent state is not unique. There are parallels and patterns at the macrolevel.

Chapter Three: Civilian and Military Power

Now we have completed the methodological review. We need to examine the value and meaning produced by the revolution-development conjunction of specific nation-making processes, which we call "instantiations". It is neither structure (i.e., the logic of capitalism) nor conjuncture (i.e., post-World War I, Bretton Woods) but the vision of the future realised in the present – the anticipations, projections, and plans of a specific nation-making process within the circle of violence and progress. We retain a focus on the question of the "scientific temper" as reflected back from multiple mirrors within a transnational constellation of

events. We label this phenomenon “circulatory dynamics”. We see how all events interact with one another dialectically, to rescue this central Marxian methodological tenet from the Heideggerian ravages of innocence and purity.

The first event is the Egyptian Urabi Revolution (1879-1882), which vividly presents an anticipatory archetype of 20th century popular anti-colonial movements – driven by multi-class power, largely peasant based, with leadership committed to political rights in the rule of law as much as seeking a social revolution in the property regime. It was the brutal crushing of this revolution by British colonialism that set Egypt ultimately upon a path to a society dominated by military power, by weakening the social basis for civilian power and shifting density to the military tradition of Mohammad Ali as the most viable means to overthrowing empire and building an independent nation. In the long experience from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt to the Free Officer’s coup in 1952, we recognize that competing organizational currents comprised in alternate combinations of the four sources of social power foster a path dependency logic leading to a specific post-independence regime outcome.

In the story of the Urabi Revolution, we follow the thread of the “scientific temper” through the transnational migratory experience of the Persian activist Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. Afghānī pursued modern scientific knowledge from a young age, travelling to British India in its pursuit only to traumatically encounter the 1857 uprising, and becoming a lifelong and widely influential anti-colonial activist. He later participated directly in forging the modernist ideological and organizational facets of the Urabi Revolution, haunted and educated by his Indian experiences, while simultaneously contributing to the growth of the transnational Nahda movement and Pan-Arabism. These experiences reveal in detail how sources of authority arise to the surface of the cultural disorder seeded by colonial occupation and thereby sire diverse social movements. We witness a process of authority formation

through a process of “temporal estrangement”, a term for which we are indebted to Ismail Fajrie Alatas.

If we pursue the logic of social movements as we find it here, we lay bare the following structural ground: a circulatory relation existing between state structure and national movement is seminal in determining the logic of a specific nation-making process. It is in this light that we eventually identify Afghānī shifting his strategy, very pragmatically, following the 1881 British crushing of the secular democratic Urabi Revolution, from secular modernism to a Pan-Islamic modernism centred on the person of the Ottoman sultan. We find that the concept of the “scientific temper”, significantly articulated by Afghānī, survives his death, and the Urabi failure, and adopts myriad new forms in the hands of diverse figures from Taha Hussein to Huda Sha’arawi. Ultimately, in recounting this story, we find how the vision of the future – in anticipations and plans – came to shift the region of density from civilian power to military power. This made nothing inevitable for the future, but it weighed events in favour of the 1952 military coup while making the outcome of civilian rule more difficult to realise.

Chapter Four: Grassroots Development

The second case study is the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, and we examine this following Dilip M. Menon’s insight that the major Swadeshi achievement was the transnational multiplication of times and spaces as an explosion of ideological power. In this case, we follow the transnational thread in the life path of Rabindranath Tagore, who self-consciously reckoned with his place as part of a social class that was a parasitic colonial creation, and tried to embrace the second circle of violence and progress. Tagore became concerned with the “scientific temper” because of his deep concern with emancipating large segments of the Indian population from the grinding poverty created under colonialism. We see that Tagore’s insights anticipated those of

Polanyi's lifeworld, and shared an affinity with the Husserlian phenomenological revolution taking place in aspects of European thought. In this way, Tagore reimagined the received orthodoxy of "development", thereby overthrowing European intellectual domination that had persisted in many anti-colonial struggles and shaped the post-independence regimes. We see that Tagore emphasised a communicative principle in any development process that anticipated certain ideas of Sen. Tagore was the major Indian thinker to articulate a sophisticated and many-sided idea of the "scientific temper", which anticipated many core Nehruvian convictions in the post-independence period. Meanwhile, we see in the Swadeshi movement the epitome of civil society formation through the negative experience of forced and self-protective mass mobilisation under the everyday pressures of colonial domination. This mass multiplication of unprecedented social encounters, breaking down strict traditional limits between millions of strangers, forges a new civil society in a way without parallel in most Western experience except for perhaps key moments in the French Revolution. This was one of the major teachings in Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*.

Chapter Five: Global Linkages

With Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, we see a vivid correlation with the main features of the Structuralist Revolution that was revolutionising European intellectual thought. We establish this through a comparison with the Russian structuralist pioneer Alexandre Koyré. Ambedkar drew his conceptual resources for articulating his specific concept of structuralism from an innovative reading of the Indian Buddhist tradition. We therefore uncover the origins of the Indian "scientific temper" on another level, for Ambedkar transcended the metaphysical limits that still defined the thought of Tagore. Ambedkar, like Tagore, vividly encountered the second circle of violence and progress.

Between structuralism and an ethical commitment to socialism, Ambedkar produced a concept anticipating Sen's "capabilities" – probably Deweyan in inspiration – that provides a space for ideals of freedom within a socialist nation-making project. Ambedkar articulated a structuralist vision of human society, in which there is no whole – except in the fictional accounts produced by vested interests – but rather multiple interconnected linkages which are all undergoing continuous transformation.

Following the experiences of Ambedkar, we discover that the events defining his life prove unintelligible without their transnational reflections in a diverse constellation of mirrors, such as Ambedkar's comparison of Dalit experience with the escaped Afro-American slaves who returned as soldiers to provide the possibility of victory in the American Civil War. Out of these investigations, a concept of citizenship emerges that sheds light on the specific nature of the state and the nation in colonial societies, an institutionally distinctive configuration of the four sources of social power. It proves to be a central core of the "scientific temper" as a concept growing through usage in diverse anti-colonial contexts, marking a major difference with the organicist concept of society that had been latent in many nation-making processes since the foundational experience of the French Revolution. Using Marc Bloch's historical theory of the progressive-regressive method, we recognize the history of ideas as a prolonged and polyvocal dialogue between the past and the present through the 'travelling' or 'circulation' of ideas over a long duration and through diverse histories and social contexts.

Chapter Six: Modernist Currents

Writing the history of political thought requires a broad and interdisciplinary area of study that should include social and intellectual history, but also literary history. This chapter analyses the philosophical writings of Mohammad Iqbal in the 1930 *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and the 1940 novel

by Ahmed Ali *Twilight in Delhi*. By focusing on the formation of ideological power as an aspect of social movements in the Indian Islamic context, we see that ideological power under colonial domination is radically warped by the deliberate policy of divide and rule, which involves the positive production by the colonial state of toxic fantasies intended to undermine anti-colonial efforts at national mobilisation. This is an early form of information war, and the inventions of empire permeate anti-colonial ideologies. In Iqbal's *Reconstruction*, we see the reproduction of an imperial discourse about Islamic identity as an ontological whole. Moreover, Iqbal's vision adopts features of post-World War I German anti-modern thought, and thereby makes the critical target of the *Reconstruction* the Enlightenment and epistemology, in the name of a notion of being. Iqbal builds a deconstructive thesis in which the original source of authentic Islamic identity has become riven with inauthenticity because of contamination over a prolonged time span by culturally alien elements. This vision is a major break from even the wide diversity of Indian Islamic traditions, and marks a distinctively modernist innovation. Echoing the Heideggerian lifeworld, this discourse provided an important source of the coming Pakistan movement as the claim for a separate and mono-religious nation-state.

However, other modernist currents were also simultaneously coming into existence. We find the articulation of a sociological lifeworld in Ali's routinely banned and controversial literary activities as part of an activist writer's collective that published *Angaaray* in 1932. Ali and his colleagues were Muslims who, through this publication, applied an Enlightenment critique condemning marital rape and promoting access to birth control and women's education while making a general case for women's rights. Through their published works, these individuals provided the "scientific temper" with a new articulation, emphasising the centrality of gender relations in dismantling all varieties of organised systems of oppression. In response, *Angaaray* was banned by the colonial

government and *fatwas* were issued by sections of the orthodox Muslim leadership, threatening the gynaecologist Rashid Jahan with acid attack. Ali and his colleagues were socialists, feminists and committed advocates of political freedom. In *Twilight in Delhi*, we see the meticulous sociological construction of the Muslim lifeworld in Delhi in the aftermath of the 1857 uprising, revealing a radically opposed modernist current among Indian Muslim intellectuals and activists within the same time frame. Ali focuses closely on the contradictions of everyday life, vividly depicting the varieties of irreparable mental angst that emerged among populations who had undergone the violence of colonial domination. *Twilight in Delhi* shows how these traces of trauma feed into imaginings of organized efforts to overthrow colonialism, and how these traces must be overcome to avoid the warped imaginary realities of colonialism resulting in tragedy once they have been internalised by its victims.

Chapter Seven: National Transition

In the colonial context, Frantz Fanon described as “national” everything that drew the populations of colonised countries into an organised whole for the purpose of ejecting empire. The national transition is the interval between forcing the departure of empire and constructing a newly independent order in its aftermath. This chapter picks up where chapter three left off. The modern experience of Egypt since the Napoleonic invasion saw instances of ascending military power, as in the Mohammad Ali state-making process, and collective bids for civilian power, as in the Urabi Revolution. Both of these opposed currents entered the field of possibilities during the national transition that culminated in the 1952 Free Officers coup. We have to trace, step by step, why the Nasserite regime came to privilege the military power stream over civilian power.

Upon examination, we discover that the “scientific temper” is not a Nehruvian concept at all. It was the implicit core of the

Gandhian strategy, in the practice of multi-class and multi-cultural mass mobilisation, with specific aims that must remain within the capacity of the opponent to understand, and rooted in the everyday practical realities of the populations who stand to benefit from the national movement as the abolition of the extractive regime of colonialism. This is exactly what Fanon meant by the formation of a civil society in a colonial context, a mode of gaining power which must endure over a prolonged time and integrate comprehensible meanings and values while adapting them to the unique modern conditions of the colonial society.

At the centre of the civilian transition, we find the autonomy of science principle, because the open space of plural differences permits the circulatory relation between institutional and individual capabilities that fosters the growth of an open and creative modern society. This proves to be the core of the “scientific temper” in its diverse conceptual usages, and the opposite of Bukharin’s argument for science as the servant of the ontologically-sanctioned one-party state. The Nasserite experience provides an ideal discursive frame for analysing the meaning of the “scientific temper” as a negative example in which the one-party state is given priority through its unifying military power over the grassroots generation of multiple independent institutions. The military coup of 1952 excluded this pluralist possibility, negating the accumulation of networks that had arisen in the Egyptian national context as part of the counter-movement in the anti-colonial “double movement”. It is impossible, however, to understand the military coup without prior recognition of a grave failure of civilian leadership, starting with the collaborationist Liberal order following the 1919 revolution. This leadership omitted the everyday process of mass education that Fanon argued is the prerequisite for a successful revolutionary transition to civilian power in colonial societies.

The outcome of such mass educational processes is in circulatory relation with state structures: the status of military power, the ethnic politics of the administrative apparatus, and

the semi-hegemonic or autocratic character of state power itself and therefore the depth of civil society networks as rooted entities capable of effecting change in a given direction. This notably includes the integration of peasant and industrial labour within the ritual fusion of the national movement in its successive attacks on colonial power. Organized multi-class struggle, as the shared experience of an emergent national culture, is the precondition for a post-independence power sharing arrangement.

The major challenge for both India and Egypt was the transition from an anti-colonial mass movement to a multi-party system within a post-independent nation-state once the colonial state was overthrown. Such a civilian order had been the historic aim of the Urabi Revolution. The military nature and outcome of the 1952 coup requires a conjunctural explanation in terms of regional geopolitics. An examination of the distinctive ideological resources in Arab nationalism deployed by the Free Officers also significantly accounts for the trajectory of post-independence events. But the unprecedented realisation of this ideological utopia in a state only reiterates the fact that a governing institution designed to bind military rebels to a central authority is structurally incapable of permitting the proliferation of legal-civilian alternatives to state power. This is so especially when the new military regime is devoid of the roots in popular prestige that accrue to leadership from the shared experience of a prolonged anti-colonial struggle. This is a dynamic that Fanon recurrently emphasised in the *Wretched of the Earth*. Prestige for the new military regime therefore had to be gained through a combination of monumental acts and advances in social rights, but the absence of an autonomous networks space under dictatorial rule prevented a pluralist culture from becoming rooted and entering into a circulatory dynamic with the state in a way capable of grounding enduring institutions beyond the charisma of the national leader. Those enduring institutions given protection under the rule of law are the social basis for individual capabilities.

The upshot of this military power dynamic was the silencing of circuits of public discourse, and the suppression of reliable information in favour of mono-vocal state misinformation, which eradicates the very premise of the “scientific temper” as a national politics of communication and negotiation based on democratic and egalitarian principles. It follows that when Nasser came to India in 1960 and announced a unity of vision and purpose between Egypt and India, this declaration was in fact undermined by irreconcilable contradictions in the meanings of terms such as the nation, democracy, socialism and freedom, a cluster of terms divided along the borderline we have already traced from the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate. We ultimately see the Nasserite nation-making experiment reproducing the logic of the second circle of violence and progress, which, unfortunately, was the case for a very large number of countries exiting colonial domination and seeking an independent path within this 20th century conjuncture.

Chapter Eight: A Revolutionary Power Transfer

Two non-events – the absence of a military coup in the chaos of post-independence Partition India, and the absence of an inclusively unifying organizational framework under post-Urabi national leadership in the Egyptian freedom struggle – provide important clues to the differing nation-making trajectories experienced by these countries, between civilian and military rule in their national development processes. We observe other differences: how civilian rule requires an established legal apparatus that defines norms which survive any leader, while military rule centres on a charismatic leader and the regime perishes with the death of that leader, leaving the country in disorder. Lastly, we see that the agentive entities that define modern nations – political parties and social movements – can only thrive in the network space created by the limiting powers of the rule of law over the modern state, which can otherwise assume a salvational posture

as embodying a total national identity and undertaking a moral mission. This is how the Nasserite regime came to present itself ideologically.

If we examine post-independence Indian institutions over the long term, we see a limited but important persistence of inward-turned military power upon a regional basis, albeit under civilian control. We see a three-tier economic track, of those who are fully integrated in the national economy, the vast number who fall outside and struggle to survive, and, lastly, those reduced to non-personhood in tribal and other communities who become the prey of uncontrolled predatory capitalism. In terms of political power, India has successfully built a single national track through the immediate introduction of universal franchise and the democratic system following the victory for independence. This single political track, the evidence suggests, has had a circulatory effect in terms of providing the institutional means for the poor – upon a regional basis - to lift themselves up collectively from the outer rings of the Indian economic system. This fact attests to the importance of the civil society space of self-organising networks, related to the Autonomy of Science principle, as not merely a feature of ideological power but also a shaper of changes in the hierarchy of political and economic power.

The single political track following Indian independence represents a revolutionary power transfer. This occurrence was historically without precedent. In Western Europe, the U.S., or other core capitalist countries, the early stages of economic development happened without significant political rights for the population, giving them no input in shaping the path of the development process. Economic development and political freedom were joined in India, a fact that that should interest every historian of innovative political ideas and practices. The explanation for why this unusual event occurred requires careful investigation of the foundations of the modern Indian nation, as constructed through the prolonged Indian freedom struggle, as the critical juncture that

defines the dynamic of path dependency in any given national history. Such critical junctures in the colonial context, as Fanon argued, cannot be realistically compared to superficially similar critical junctures in non-colonial contexts. In both cases, the critical juncture is the source of modern agentive entities such as political parties, nations, social movements, parliaments, and other institutions. But, as Fanon explained in the *Wretched of the Earth*, these critical junctures in colonial contexts are defined by features without comparison elsewhere: (1) a culturally alien regime which, superimposing itself as superior through modern technological power, uses modern disinformation techniques to permanently interfere with existing communication pathways and thereby alter how entire cultures function; (2) an extractive process which does not extend capitalism to the occupied territory, but dismantles all prior existing industry to transfer wealth back to the mother country; (3) the formation of a new civil society on a mass scale under the traumatic conditions of self-protectively resisting foreign occupation and war. It is not cultural authenticity, but the mass mobilised struggle against colonial occupation that simultaneously forms a democratic education and a weapon against empire.

The specificities of the Indian critical juncture cannot be explained simply by the supposed uniqueness of Indian culture. The explanation is in a many-sided transnational process, with the same elements of chance and timing that rule every event. It is true that, in order to understand the Nehruvian “scientific temper” in its widest nation-making sense, we must trace its roots in the Gandhian circle of moral consideration as the basis for the Indian freedom struggle after 1920. But Gandhian practice was, in important ways, a radical reconstruction of the French revolutionary nation-making heritage. Gandhi also publicly compared the Indian freedom struggle to the Bolshevik revolution in the late phase, at the time of the 1942 Quit India movement. In this discussion, Gandhi invoked terms like history, revolution, democracy, and individual autonomy, marking his utterances with the Enlightenment tradition

related to the “history of equality”. But Gandhi transformed the entire Enlightenment tradition by relocating its centre in *ahimsa* or non-violence, by which he meant a dialogic and open-ended process of social conflict resolution, to be achieved through mass direct action to persuade the adversary. Above all, the purpose of Gandhian non-violence was the maximum inclusion possible of the civilian population in the direct struggle for Indian independence, notably including women and individuals generally excluded from violent military forms of power seizure. This praxis was the kernel of the civil society formation process to which we have alluded. It follows that Gandhian non-violent practice, as the enduring pattern underlying the growing Indian mass movement, automatically excluded on principle any military outcome in the independence leadership.

The ideological specificity of *ahimsa* was not merely responding to the geo-political norm of violence as the primary means to political change, but to the abundant 1930s-inspired organicist streams emerging in India and – under the shaping influence of colonial power – making political appeals purely upon the grounds of some arbitrary construction of religious identity taken to be its only authentic version. It was in this spirit that Gandhi appointed Nehru as his successor, upon the basis of the “scientific temper”. It was precisely in this way that the Indian nation-making process broke out of the frame of the second circle of violence and progress. The same logic which defined the Gandhian freedom struggle came to structure the ethics and meaning of the Nehruvian experiment – in its various successes as well as its failures – in Indian post-colonial development, the self-protective reconstruction of a nation following its having been stripped bare spiritually and materially by colonial extraction.

PART I

The Circle of Violence and Progress

CHAPTER 1

Methodological Review: Sociological and Ontological

Methodology: Dialectics and Purity

The starting point of dialectics is being ceaselessly confronted with contradictory situations in everydayness. Nietzschean materialism was anti-dialectical, for “dialectics is a case of decadence” (i.e., levelling the nobility to the mass level, subverting intrinsic difference, master becomes brother). A revolt against “equal rights”, Nietzschean ethics concerned not “consequences”, or “evil outcomes”, but “an instinct for cleanliness”.¹ The point is to protect the purity of cultural identity. Marxian universalism, by contrast, denouncing the violence and misery perpetrated by capitalism upon the millions, gave centrality to contradictions and consequences. In Marx’s concern for the millions who earn very little, and remain one illness away from losing their homes, their families, and their lives, nothing is pure. A conjunctural explanation links child soldiers and military industrial complex, drug economies and capitalist economy, for prosperity flowers with misery, and power with oppression.

1 Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo* (London: Penguin, 1992), 9, 82, 14-18.

The 2015 Veyne-Gauchet Debate: “Epistemology” to “Ontology”

The chapter examines the French Post-Structuralist methodological roots of Post-Development and Subaltern thought, which privilege ontology. The 2015 Marcel Gauchet and Paul Veyne debate serves this purpose. It reveals the Heideggerian-Marxist fusion in Augustinian time: an alternative definition of “concreteness” in the uniquely unrepeatable moment, transcending scientific generalization. Scientific “objects” suppress a “deeper” non-objective time in Augustine’s *Confessions*.² Miracle is in the uniquely unreproducible purity of every irretrievable moment. In natural law, causes have effects. A miracle occurs when God intervenes to change the rules.

Paul Veyne (b. 1930), Ancient Roman Specialist, opposed the use of torture by the French colonial anti-insurgency in Algeria, but resigned from the PCF over the 1956 Budapest insurrection, subsequently embracing Nietzschean and Foucauldian methodology. For Veyne, “Foucault revolutionizes History” by “dynamiting political rationalism”.³ He argued that this made Foucault “the first completely positivist historian”, because he had subverted the “subject” (“political rationalism”).⁴ The social scientific terms (governed, state, liberty, etc.), Veyne writes, “render anachronistic” the “originality” (i.e., temporal uniqueness) of the “practices”.⁵ The abstraction of sociological consequentialism, for Veyne, must yield methodologically to ontological “concreteness”: “human facts are rare, not embedded in reason, but surrounded by the void of unique unrepeatable experience”. By this account, Marx’s “mode of production” is “rationality” covering “rarity”, in a universal condemnation of modern scientific knowledge as a

2 Saint Augustin. *Confessions* (Evreux: Seuil, 1982), 274.

3 Paul Veyne. *Comment on écrit l'histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 394.

4 Veyne, 386.

5 Veyne, 395.

pernicious “will”.⁶ The reference is the Nietzschean “innocence of becoming”.⁷

Veyne’s methodology of “concreteness” follows a Foucauldian conception of power. The “Will to Knowledge” has, for Foucault, “left us almost totally in the dark about the concrete functionings of power in Western societies”.⁸ Foucault’s “abolition of the scientific object”, Veyne therefore argued, attains “the things themselves”.⁹ We can trace this claim back to Heidegger’s methodological aim of reaching “the things themselves”, which is made possible by rejecting scientific representation.¹⁰ These “things themselves” are what Nietzsche, even earlier, had called the “innocence of becoming”.¹¹ It is an anti-epistemological methodology which rejects the claims of objectivity made by the modern scientific method. In practice, this methodology posits a cultural revivalism. Heidegger’s “being”, “concealed” beneath the “Will to Knowledge”, is revivable through “deconstruction”.¹² Foucault’s coinage “rarity” corresponds to what Heidegger had called “historicity”, a deeper ontological level (i.e., being) than sociological or historical abstraction that we call objectivity (i.e., beings).¹³

This magical refutation of objectivity inherited from Heidegger was not unique to Foucault. Avant Gard writer Georges Bataille (1897-1962), pioneer of Heideggerian anarchism, conceived revolution as ceaseless change for its own sake, pure violence creating transcendent meaning, through bodily pain and cruelty. Bataille came of age during the interwar period, when World

6 Veyne, 386-395.

7 Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 35.

8 Michel Foucault. *Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 5-6.

9 Veyne, 412.

10 Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 24.

11 Friedrich Nietzsche. *Will to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1968), 100.

12 Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 17-23.

13 Heidegger, *BT*, 341-363.

War I carnage seemed to have confirmed Nietzsche's apocalyptic prophecies about "European nihilism".¹⁴ Foucault echoed Bataille's *L'Erotisme* (1957): the modern scientific "object" is shallow, compared to primordial "ontology" in anxiety, excess, violence, and contagion, which illuminate "being", in a culturalist theory where power creates meaning.¹⁵ There is also Pierre Klossowski, whose *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* (1969) was, in Foucault's view, "the greatest book of philosophy I have read". Klossowski condemned the "metaphysical virus of thought and science".¹⁶ The deeper roots of the Nietzschean-Marxian hybrid are in the French revolutionary syndicalist Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* (1908). Sorel saw the role of violence as saving the world from "barbarism", equating it with life, creativity, and virtue as a cleansing force. He broke with cosmopolitan international socialism and shunned epistemology. Sorel contended that "myths" are important as "expressions of will to act". Their truth is irrelevant so long as they mobilise violent action. Sorel wrote: "the general strike is a myth in which socialism seals itself from outside influence, an organization of images capable of instinctively evoking all of the feelings corresponding to the war of socialism against modern society".¹⁷ Following the rehabilitation of colonel Dreyfus in the 1890s Dreyfus Affair, Sorel "vented his frustrations by converting from socialism to the proto-fascism of the Action Française".¹⁸

The reaction to Veyne's arguments by Marcel Gauchet (b. 1946) is also revealing. From modest rural settings, constrained

14 Richard Wolin. *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 156.

15 Georges Bataille. *L'Erotisme* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2011), 14, 41-43, 49, 68-69.

16 Pierre Klossowski. *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (London: Athlone, 2000), 6.

17 Georges Sorel. *Reflexions sur la Violence* (Loveral: Editions Labor, 2006), 156.

18 Wolin. *Wind*, 157.

by agricultural traditions, Gauchet reached higher education through France's Republican school system. A 1960s Left labour organizer, he similarly protested French oppression of Algeria. Like Veyne, Gauchet was troubled by the politics of the Soviet Union. He joined Castoriadis' *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (1949-65), opposing the Stalinist French Left. He upheld the "social imaginary" (1975), legacy of the Durkheimian "collective imaginary", against Foucauldian "structuralism"¹⁹ Gauchet therefore identified with the sociological tradition of epistemology. He publicly attacked Veyne's 1971 "Foucault revolutionizes history", condemning "clerics of nothingness" and "deconstruction", referring to Julien Benda's 1927 *La Trahison des Clercs*.²⁰

The debate between Veyne and Gauchet exposes opposing visions of "power". Veyne embraces Nietzschean "power", spurning "objectivity" and "consequence" to celebrate the "training of men".²¹ Power is meaning bestowing, a cultural force. Foucauldian "innocence" is indifferent to securing human rights for the mad, prisoners, workers, homosexuals, and other marginalized groups, eschewing universal justice as a term complicit in the universalising levelling of "modernity". Debating Noam Chomsky, Foucault declared "justice" an "invented instrument" of "power" embodying the "Will to Knowledge" in "our culture". What did Foucault therefore mean by "altering power relations", given his disdain for Chomsky's call to change the "social and political organization of society"?²² The answer is that Foucault championed aesthetic agency: "in our society art has become something related only to objects

19 Danilo Martuccelli. Cornelius Castoriadis: Promesses et problèmes de la création. *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 2002/2 n. 113 pp. 285-305.

20 Marcel Gauchet. De L'Inexistentialisme. *Marianne* Nov. 2015. 26-27.

21 Monroe C. Beardsley. *The European Philosophes from Descartes to Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 860.

22 *Foucault Reader*, 5-7.

and not to individuals or to life”.²³ In short, Foucault called for the Heideggerian “cultural paradigm”, externalizing aesthetic values and meanings as a public politics of belonging. Foucault’s frightening discovery in Iran’s 1979 revolution revealed the significance of such thought for any open or multi-cultural society. Foucault discovered in Iran: traditions can mandate arbitrary persecution of designated groups on “ontological” grounds. Foucault’s woman host informed him: a custom exists of “executing” homosexuals, when he enquired concerning post-1979 revolutionary policy on homosexuals. He sat alone, shocked, quietly, having believed he was witnessing the first “postmodern revolution”.²⁴ Iran was “breaking out”, Foucault had argued, of “modernity”, the “worst system in history”, based on “the Enlightenment”.²⁵ Foucault had disdainfully dismissed Iran’s deep secular Left tradition as “inauthentic”, copies of Western ideologues, in contrast with an “authentic” Islamist revolution.

With Foucauldian methodology, the Eurocentrism critique is fundamentally altered. Foucauldian Eurocentrism means “modernity” contaminating the non-modern “lifeworlds”. Contamination is central to *Being and Time*, in the “forgetting of being”.²⁶ The Veyne-Gauchet debate exposes a methodology where “objective knowledge” replaces “capitalism” as the source of oppression, a corrupting of innocence. Indian “old school” Marxists (i.e., Bipan Chandra, Romila Thapar) defended India’s “national movement” and formal democracy as gains for the Indian masses. Comparative sociology and empirical history, they argued, safeguard these gains.²⁷ These secular intellectuals were

23 Michel Foucault. *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984* (London: Penguin, 1997), xxx.

24 Janet Afary/Kevin B. Anderson. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: UOC Press, 2005), 143.

25 Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed. *Michel Foucault. Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-84* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 224.

26 Heidegger, *BT*, 1.

27 Romila Thapar. *The Past as Present. Forging Contemporary Identities through History* (New Delhi: Aleph, 2014), xi-xii.

branded “mentally colonized”.²⁸ It is important, methodologically, to clarify the difference between a “critique” – which seeks the unifying kernel of reason through the mystifying entanglement of myriad contradictions, as a strategy of unveiling the objective truth – and “deconstruction”, which, in its Heideggerian articulation in *Being and Time*, consisted of four core elements: (1) the priority of “occurrence”, or unique unreproducible time; (2) the occlusion, forgetting or uprooting of authentic cultural tradition as the result of the Enlightenment project of scientific objectivity; (3) the deconstruction of modern epistemology to recover the original sources of being, through provincialisation of scientific representation as merely one more possible perspective in a world where multiple cultural perspectives hold an equal truth content in terms of validity; (4) the result is the attainment of “true concreteness”, that is, ontology as privileged over epistemology. This is the grounds for an “awakening”.²⁹ We now examine how this deconstructive methodology functions in the context of studying the experiences of colonial societies.

Post-Development: “Implantation” and the Marxist-Heidegger Fusion

Arturo Escobar’s *Encountering Development* (1994) extends Veayne’s “Foucauldian revolution”. “Implantation” entombs populations in “development discourse”. *Innocence* and *modernity* are dichotomies, grounded in the *disease* metaphor. A “new regime of representation” makes the “decline of the colonial order and the rise of development” a single unbroken event. Independence certainly saw colonial powers depart while leaving the mechanisms of exploitation in place, enabling local elites to collaborate in

28 Meera Nanda. *Prophets Facing Backward. Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 25.

29 Heidegger, *BT*, 17-23.

vastly profitable international systems lacking local accountability. Sociological causality explains the global dirty money system run by bankers, lawyers and accountants. This, however, is not Escobar's argument. "Representation", the Heideggerian "world picture", is a monolithic rationality (i.e., epistemology) that invades the purity of local lifeworlds (i.e., ontology). The "1940s development idea", an "overlap of colonial and developmentalist regimes of representation", collapses colonialism and post-independence into one ontological impulse.³⁰

We have left sociological analysis of causes for the "authenticity" categories of Heideggerian ontology. The two methodologies, epistemic and ontological, cannot be complementary. "Viruses", inexistent "before 1945", contaminate the world.³¹ In Escobar's "implantation" thesis, "reality is colonized by the development discourse", in a "will to know everything about the Third World". It "flourished unhindered, growing like a virus" to "pass judgment on entire social groups and forecast their future".³² The anti-capitalist Left was equally bewitched by this "new regime of representation", for it has "became impossible to conceptualize social reality in other terms".

The sociological argument might go like this. A transnational institutional matrix shaped "development" history, from the Tanzimat Ottoman Empire to Third Republic France and Meiji Japan, at least since the 18th century. Systemic military, economic, political and ideological pressures, linked to Empire and technological revolutions, forced complicating change upon the institutional fabric of societies everywhere.³³ Methodologically, the sociologist Michael Mann criticises "pure and monocausal theories"

30 Arturo Escobar. *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 26-27.

31 Escobar, 31.

32 Escobar, 5, 44.

33 Tadd Fernée. *Enlightenment and Violence: modernity and nation-making* (Delhi: Sage, 2014), 196-244.

to explain the modern history of power, arguing that theory must understand the “entwining” interactions among “four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military and political”. Mann argues that events such as the French Revolution, British Empire, nationalism, socialism, middle class or peasant politics, or the causes and outcomes of wars, cannot “culminate in simple statements of ultimate primacy”.³⁴

For Escobar, one “dominant image” explains this conjunctural complexity.³⁵ In a *universal/local dichotomy*, there is “a confrontation of local and global power, popular and scientific knowledge”.³⁶ It is the thesis of “nihilism”, a world devoid of meaning. The “modern nation-state and modern science” inflict a “disenchanted cosmos”.³⁷ Escobar depicts “objectifying positivist science” as the fundamentally oppressive force, calling for a “strategic move away from conventional Western modes of knowing in general”. Ontology, meanwhile, is celebrated in “Third World imagery, cosmology, and mythical cultural traditions”, the “magic and myth in social life”. It is a “counterhegemonic force”, opposing “instrumentalizing and reactionary attempts” of “the state and modern science to domesticate popular culture”.³⁸ Escobar’s Heideggerian utopia posits peasant reality as a unified community of *uniform interest*, escaping modern dualisms (i.e., humankind/nature; individual/community):

“... the peasant world is conceived of as a living being, with no separation between people and nature, between individual and community, between society and the gods ... knowledge is continually re-created as part of a commitment to strengthening and enriching

34 Michael Mann. *The Sources of Social Power volume II. The rise of classes and nation-states* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-2.

35 Escobar, 4-5.

36 Escobar, 98

37 Escobar, 198.

38 Escobar, 96, 216-220.

reality, not to transforming it. Language is alive, its meaning is always dictated by context.”³⁹

This organicist local “being” contrasts with the “universalism and individuation that define modernity”.⁴⁰ Escobar urges the “mythic and spiritual” as a “utopian capacity to dream”. His Heideggerian methodology is explicit:

“Heidegger makes the case that modern Europe was the first society to produce a structured image of itself and the world, what he calls a world picture. The modern world picture entails an unprecedented way of objectifying the world; the world comes to be what it is ‘to the extent that it is set up by man ... For the first time there is no such thing as a ‘position’ for man”.⁴¹

The sociology-ontology contradiction is now manifest. Declining cosmic “position” is Escobar’s grievance. Escobar condemns “the nature/culture split” of “modern society”. Upon inspection, that “split” is really the political problem of modern secularism. Mark Lilla has referred to the modern secular age as the Great Separation.⁴² This refers to the severance of politics from cosmology, and focus exclusively on human needs, that accompanied the collapse of the Christian world picture with the 17th century Scientific Revolution. As hypotheses and experiment replaced dogma in the epistemic paradigm, there was no fixed picture of the cosmos.

Escobar writes: “development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression”.⁴³ True, capitalism has produced mass poverty, war, a hopeless lack of opportunities for millions, in an unaccountable global system rewarding *insiders*. Causal analysis explains this.

39 Escobar, 169.

40 Escobar, 220-221.

41 Escobar, 208,232.

42 Mark Lilla. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (Vintage: 2008), 55.

43 Escobar, 4.

Sociological “cause”, however, is unanalysable upon the basis of Escobar’s methodology because he dismisses scientific objectivity as complicit in the “creation and reproduction of modern capitalist relations”. “Science”, not the capitalist system, is ultimately Escobar’s culprit in the above passage describing impoverishment, exploitation and oppression. Populations are manipulated through “representation”:

“These structuring processes must be made invisible for the operation to be successful, in the same way that in cinema all marks of enunciation (the director’s work, the acting, the point of view of the camera, and so on) must be effaced to create the impression of reality that characterizes it”.⁴⁴

Escobar’s “representation” refers to a “recurrent theme of postwar French thought” in asserting “the ontological gap separating our linguistic capacities from reality”, or a criticism of the notion that “mind is capable of portraying reality truthfully and objectively”.⁴⁵ Thereby rejecting scientific epistemology, Escobar celebrates “local forms of knowledge” in “manifold forms of resistance to the colonial power/knowledge apparatus”. Escobar is seeking magic. The Third World will “irrupt into a new realm of language”. Capitalism is merely a “culture”, in a world where everything is reducible to “cultural differences”.⁴⁶ Asserting that resistance “springs from the sheer fact of cultural difference”, Escobar considerably simplifies our methodological understanding of how classes and nations have been major actors in the history of capitalism.¹⁷

Encountering Development generated a “post-development” tradition. Rooted in the 1960s, academic ‘outsider’ Ivan Illich challenged “development” as a threat to people’s autonomy. Illich made such inflammatory assertions as: “schools rationalize the

44 Escobar, 106-107.

45 Wolin, Richard. *The Seduction of Unreason. The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: PUP, 2004), 19, 187.

46 Escobar, 27-52.

divine origin of social stratification more than churches have ever done”.⁴⁷ However, Illich rightly argued that cherished concepts (“freedom”, “equality”, “solidarity”, or “improvement”) may conceal a destructive, domineering impulse. Illich urged a context-specific solution to social problems, rather than disguised campaigns serving foreign corporate needs, critically assessing “the automobile, the hospital, the school, and any of the many other so-called evidently necessary implements for modern life”. They may not be optimal in every setting for enhancing wellbeing and freedom. Illich’s early arguments were therefore not “anti-development”, but critiques of externally imposed market-driven models. Urging ethical “development”, Illich condemned untrammelled capitalist profit at all human or natural cost. He was still discussing modes of institution-building.

Illich had not yet embraced Heideggerian non-interventionism. Seeking to relieve impoverished populations of avoidable suffering, Illich questioned not goals but means. Heideggerianism begins where the “idea of progress” becomes the fundamental evil. Illich subsequently identified the enemy in the “idea of progress” as the “cause” of nihilism (“after ethos”):

“Commitment to progress has extinguished the possibility of an agreed setting within which a search for the common good can arise. Techniques of information, communication and management now define the political process, political life has become an empty euphemism”.⁴⁸

Technological acceleration has reduced human life to maximum efficiency. Illich’s 1970s outlook shifted to “culturalism”, in equating socialist utopia with an indigenous culture defined by uniform interests.¹⁷³ The driving mood was despair over any possibility of just institution-building. Only the Heideggerian “cultural

47 Escobar, 168.

48 Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree, eds. *The Post-Development Reader* (Claremont: David Philip Publishers, 2003), 109.

paradigm” remained: “That time is past. The possibility of a city set up as the milieu that fosters a common search for the good has vanished.” Illich continues, in tape recorded conversation Iranian post-development scholar Majid Rahnema:

“You have often spoken to me of the times when Islam could still shape an ethical city. However, in the East as well as the West, we now live in the ‘after ethos.’”⁴⁹

In the absence of unifying meanings and values, a just society is impossible. This organicism conflicts with multi-culturalism, where diverse traditions might remake one another. Organicist dreams of unified interests and homogenous values define the Heideggerian “cultural paradigm” as a methodological ideal. The analysis of “development” issues (i.e., crimes against the natural environment and indigenous populations by capitalism and the modernizing state) based on Heideggerianism is false and misleading. Post-Development is exemplified in Majid Rahnema, Illich’s interlocutor, an Iranian critic of “the myth of development”. He writes:

“The leaders of the independence movements were eager to transform their devastated countries into modern nation-states, while the ‘masses’, who had often paid for their victories with their blood, were hoping to liberate themselves from both the old and new forms of subjugation”.⁵⁰

No meaningful difference exists, by Rahnema’s account, between Empire and Nehru. National independence was a massive swindle:

“... when the ‘national’ leaders of various anti-colonial struggles took over the movements emerging from the grassroots, they succeeded in making them believe that development was the best answer to their demands [...] development had been, from the beginning, nothing but a deceitful mirage. It had acted as a factor of division, of exclusion and of discrimination rather than of liberation of any kind.”¹⁷⁶

49 Rahnema/Bawtree, x.

50 Rahnema/Bawtree, 98. 109. 100-104.

The “implantation” thesis again celebrates “innocence”. A recurrent methodological lexis becomes visible. “Modernity” is a “virus”: “development ideology” is “an enemy, an infectious agent that comes from outside.”¹⁷⁷ The “virus” contrasts with “cultural roots” and “unique ways”, permitting societies to “maintain and defend the very foundations of their life against different odds originating from ‘outside’”. Rahnema echoes “authenticity” movements in pre-revolutionary Iran (i.e., Ahmed Fardid, Al-e Ahmed, and Ali Shari’ati), inspired by Heideggerian thought. Al-e Ahmed (1923-69) wrote *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* (1962). A secular Marxist and writer, his disillusionment with the Soviet Union (i.e., over Tudeh Party subservience in the Azerbaijani crisis) kindled “re-discovery” of Islamic roots. *Occidentosis* influenced the new middle class and youth to embrace a highly reconstructed Islamism preceding the 1978 Revolution, conceiving a “Third Way” in Iran’s anti-imperialist struggle. Al-e Ahmed’s inspiration was Israel and Heideggerian philosophy introduced into Iran by Fardid in the 1930s.⁵¹

Rahnema revoices al-e Ahmad’s argument, calling it a “new” post-development perspective. The Western “disease” is “AIDS II - to which vernacular societies were exposed during the modern age”. It involves “foreign bodies threatening their socio-cultural immune systems”. The solution requires that “vernacular” societies “keep the outside out and the inside in”.⁵² Al-e Ahmad wrote:

“I speak of ‘Occidentosis’ [*Gharbzadegi*] as of tuberculosis. But perhaps it more closely resembles an infestation of weevils. Have you seen how they attack wheat? From inside. The bran remains intact, but it is just a shell, like a cocoon left behind on a tree. At any rate, I am speaking

51 See Ali Mirsepassi. *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization* (CUP 2000) and *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought. The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (CUP 2017)

52 Rahnema/Bawtree, 112.

of a disease: an accident from without, spreading in an environment rendered susceptible to it.”⁵³

Rahnema invokes the Heideggerian organic community. Each “village” or “community” is a “web of solidarities” and “belonging”, based on “signs and symbols, of ways of doing and talking”. They differ from “modern ‘economized’ societies”. For them, “to live in dignity is defined by tradition” and “culturally defined needs”, with a “social tissue”, to the “benefit of everyone”.⁵⁴ Rahnema scorns education.⁵⁵ Innocence is in “biophilic forces of resistance”. Against objectivity, one must live in “one’s own truth”.⁵⁶

This Heideggerianism denies the reality of mass poverty. Populations of the global South are “not poor, but free”. They seek only to “protect their local symbolic sites from destruction”, to protect “harmony between God and people”.¹⁸⁴ Such arguments have long been deployed everywhere by ruling elites over the poor: poverty is an outside implantation, the population is happy when left undisturbed by corrupting ideas, when people know their place. “Modernity” is to blame for disrupting social harmony. The Confederacy argued thus preceding the American Civil War, insisting southern slaves were happy, taken care of, and better off than under capitalism.⁵⁷

To sum up, post-development methodology describes social realities in terms of a metaphysical enslavement. The “development paradigm” is “the one and only way of thinking” which “stifles all attempts at free thinking”.⁵⁸ “Modernity” is the “linear perception

53 Jalal Al-e Ahmad. *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984), 27.

54 Rahnema/Bawtree, 113-116.

55 Rahnema/Bawtree, 119-120.

56 Rahnema/Bawtree, xiii.

57 Tadd Graham Fernée. “The American Civil War as a social revolution: the Enlightenment, Providential consciousness and changes in moral perception.” *English Studies at NBU*, 2015 Vol. 1, Issue 1, 80-96.

58 Rahnema/Bawtree, xiv.

of time” (i.e. cause-consequence).⁵⁹ “Development” is “the Western model or way of seeing”, where “group” contrasts with “individual”, inflicting the “harm of democracy”.⁶⁰ Yet, to dismantle the ideological myth of *endless economic growth*, the poisoned “social imaginary” causing global environmental destruction and creating millions of have-nots, we require the rational analysis and democratic accountability that post-development condemns as “causing” the current crisis.

Guha’s “Pure Violence”: Truth-Sacred-Violence Triangle

In a second instance of Heideggerian influence, by contrast, we are told that pure violence is a path to divine salvation. This refers to Sorel’s idea that violence is not an occasionally necessary means to an end, but a creative and worldmaking force that is positive in itself. It is equally ontological, demonstrating the variety of Heideggerian reach among modern scholars in terms of methodology. For Ranajit Guha, Subaltern School founder, that moment of violence is an end-in-itself, a holy moment, like Foucault’s “rarity”. Its cultural incommensurability eludes scientific comprehension in Heideggerian “historicity”.

If Guha’s *A Rule of Property for Bengal* (1963) was a major breakthrough in Marxist historiography, the *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* (1983) was an aesthetic triumph that shattered linear conventions of narrative history. However, it obscured the complex sociological underpinnings of wars and revolutions by portraying violence from below as a holy moment and revolutions as magical occasions. Guha’s *Elementary Aspects* has been hailed as a “shipyard”, producing “thousands of ships”.⁶¹ Yet its methodological

59 Rahnema/Bawtree, 66.

60 Rahnema/Bawtree, 32.

61 Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), ix.

legacy twisted *capitalism* from Marxian sociology into Heidegger's cultural *modernity*.

A 2010 interview described Guha's historical career as "relating popular conceptions of radicalism with transcendental ideals of moral-religious justice". Guha declared from Vienna: "I believe in the *concept* of God. ... I think that this belief is essential because it prompts man to go beyond himself and search for justice and perfection". Modern Indians have lost God: "Modern Indians ... to their detriment, have neglected this extremely rich heritage of Indian philosophy [concerned with God] ... I want to remind people of the need to go back to these concepts".⁶² In sum, revivalism is a road to perfection. Guha's reawakening to faith, through the 1970s Cold War and the 1978 Iranian Revolution, exemplifies the "post-modern" crisis of the secular Left intellectual from New Delhi to Tehran and New York.

Chatterjee, Guha's foremost student, explains the Subaltern founder's disillusionment with Soviet politics prompting "a deeper questioning of an entire mode of modern knowledge [placing] enormous value on the technological mastery over nature" and inspired by "Heidegger".⁶³ Disillusioned with Marxism, Guha migrated to Heidegger, approaching God through the spectacle of popular religious insurgencies. Guha explains "perfection" underlying justice:

"[The] search for perfection animates man's desire for justice. For me, this has been a prime object of study, to study the norms of transcendental justice embedded in human beings, which manifests in peasant insurgency, in popular religion, and so on. The notion of justice present in popular religion has always moved me immensely.

62 "In Search of Transcendence: An Interview with Ranajit Guha" by Milinda Banerjee. https://www.sai.uniheidelberg.de/history/download/ranajit_guha_interview_2.2.11.pdf

63 Ranajit Guha. *The Small Voice of History: Collected Essays* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2009), 16.

This theme of perfection again animates the quest for upliftment, *uttaran*, for going beyond oneself”.⁶⁴

The Guha-Heidegger phenomenon concerns the modern dilemma of cultural authenticity, far from traditional religious concerns over rites and texts. A leading American South Asia scholar celebrated the Subaltern school: “Indians are, for perhaps the first time since colonization, showing sustained signs of reappropriating the capacity to represent themselves”.⁶⁵ This praise for recovered cultural roots was a “congratulation” received with “gratification” by the Subaltern collective.⁶⁶ The Heideggerian link was explicit. One member chided those for whom “Heidegger’s name raises politically correct hackles because of his Nazi past”.⁶⁷

Guha embraced epistemic symmetry as a methodology in later work, declaring “evidence” a Western cultural feature: “Experience” (i.e., evidence) stands for truth only in the “European narrative” optic. Modernist representation is “assimilation”, i.e., erasure of difference.⁶⁸ Guha initially celebrated a “spiritualization of politics”, where violence is beautiful fatality.⁶⁹ Aesthetically sculpted violent images, i.e., noses chopped off and severed heads, celebrating cruelty and excess, are patterned in rich philosophical discourse.⁷⁰ Subalternity is “turning things upside down”, as if revolution

64 Guha, “Transcendence”.

65 Ronald Inden, “Orientalist Constructions of South Asia”, *Modern Asian Studies* 20:3 (1986), 445.

66 Ranajit Guha ed. *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 263.

67 Dipesh Chakrabarty. “Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of Subaltern Studies” in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed. *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000), 278-279.

68 Ranajit Guha. *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002), 54, 63-66.

69 Guha, *Elementary*, 199.

70 Guha, *Elementary*, 215-217.

inverts a geometric dichotomy.⁷¹ Conceiving violence as God, the hidden order of things, it is a postmodern remaking of Arkoun's "sacred-violence-truth triangle" of traditional organized religions.⁷² *Elementary Aspects* depicts "a clash between two incompatible theories", the peasant and landlord, money lender and colonial official.⁷³ Cultural incommensurability defines the argument. Transcending "just retribution", there is a "perfect symmetry of violence", a "total and integrated violence".⁷⁴ "Insurrection" acts on "divine command, as justice".⁷⁵ It is a "geometric progression",⁷⁶ a "political holocaust",⁷⁷ a "holy inspiration".⁷⁸ Prophecy is the "foundation of all rebellion", while political thinking is "sacralised". Celebrating the "religious ritualization of the political process", Guha seemingly invokes the 1979 Iranian revolutionary experience.⁷⁹ This vision of revolutionary change also echoed religious Naxalism:

"Strangely, although we shudder at the execution mania in Khomeini's Iran (invariably justified or rationalised by convenient interpretations of the Koran), we seldom see the parallels within India. They are of many kinds and organically linked to tribe, caste and community. The Punjab scenario is very much a part of the growing global cult of religious revivalism, violence and terrorism."⁸⁰

Later, Guha unreservedly embraced postmodernism with *History at the Limit of World History* (2002). Guha's "recovery of

71 Guha, *Elementary*, 165.

72 Mohammed Arkoun. *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Saqi, 2002), 88-96.

73 Guha, *Elementary*, 89.

74 Guha, *Elementary*, 92/218/157.

75 Guha, *Elementary*, 187.

76 Guha, *Elementary*, 239/245.

77 Guha, *Elementary*, 246.

78 Guha, *Elementary*, 120.

79 Guha, *Elementary*, 266-277.

80 Romesh Thapar. "Religious Naxalism", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 18, Issue No. 43, 22 Oct, 1983.

historicality” is Heideggerian⁸¹ Guha pursues “transcendence” over “improvement”. Perfection replaces comparison. Scientific objectivity is covert imperialism occluding authentic Indian identity. A “different” history recovers the authentic Indian self, not merely the retrieval of objective Indian experiences whitewashed by colonial narratives. This cultural “recovery” is *self-determination*, following Heidegger’s “authenticity”. The modern Indian intellectual, Guha argues, accepting empirical methodology, is contaminated into collusion with the modern state. *History* must become a poetic quest of cultural self-recovery. Indian “being” has been concealed:

“The statism so firmly entrenched in South Asian historiography is an outcome of this narratological revolution which has, by its very success, prevented us as historians from apprehending it as a problem”.⁸²

This passage echoes Heidegger: “the being that we ourselves are is ontologically farthest from us”.⁸³ India’s contemporary ills are in “living dangerously close to the limit of language”.⁸⁴ Foucault’s “rebirth of language” is the clear methodological source.⁸⁵ Heidegger’s quasi-religious Truth concept is espoused, in “protecting the power of the most elemental words”.⁸⁶ India must regain “the primal unity of the age of poetry” in the “space beyond World-History”. Evoking World-History and “what is unthinkable within its boundaries”, Guha employs the Heideggerian *modernity/indigenous dichotomy*. The epistemic villain is “modernist continuity and completeness” (i.e., causality and explanation).⁸⁷ The solution is to “recover historicality”. Just as Escobar had maintained, “modernity” is a pre-recorded universe: “A theatre, [which] already knows the plot, with roots in the Enlightenment”. Lost “Facticity” is Heideggerian

81 Guha, *History*, 45.

82 Guha, *History*, 1- 5.

83 Heidegger, *BT*, 287.

84 Guha, *History*, 6.

85 Michel Foucault. *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 395.

86 Heidegger, *BT*, 202.

87 Guha, *History*, 7-11.

jargon for a people's existence that, unperceivable by science, is experienced atmospherically.⁸⁸

The Heideggerian “wonder at being” is Guha’s alternative, invoking innocence. “Wonder” is a “long lost European tradition” that non-Western cultures still retain. Against modern “curiosity” (a category for rootlessness in *Being and Time*), the aesthetic contrasts with objectivity.⁸⁹ In “ruptures with the past”, the West follows the “logic of externalization”, resulting in “homeless” and “restless” people. Modern “noise” has drowned being. The Indian cultural paradigm of “storytelling” opposes “History” as “assimilation”. Tradition is based on “wonder and repetition”. The methodological lexis is unmistakably Heideggerian.

The lexis corresponds to a rather crude depiction of how power works. Firstly, the state is reduced to a “representation”, the embodiment of a culturally alien worldview. The modern state embodies Heideggerian “now time”, the source of forgetting being. Objective history only “provides the state with a past record”.⁹⁰ It “displaces the poet”, covering the “magic in everyday life”, embodied in the “eternal peasant”. Meanwhile, “electoral democracy” is “futile intrigue”. Indian villages are “pure and unassimilated”, proving that “every temporality is not quantitative”.⁹¹ Here, an “alternative historicity can still live happily with the past”, that is, an authentic local culture. The “prose of the world” (i.e., local culture) champions innocence: “the globalization of a regional development specific to modern Europe – that is, the overcoming of the prose of the world by the prose of history”. Concreteness is “*the opposite side of a limit*”, a utopian frontier defending traditional being from an alien cultural view that is universal and empty.⁹²

Secondly, social transformation becomes simply violence

88 Guha, *History*, 45, 27, 75.

89 Guha, *History*, 54, 63-66.

90 Guha, *History*, 54-73, 68.

91 Guha, *History*, 72-73/88-92.

92 Guha, *History*, 45.

between dichotomous forces. Guha urges non-dialogic violence in the crushing of dissent (“class hatred cannot afford to be sweet and forgiving”). The top-down politics of coercion drive the revolutionary moment.⁹³ The beautiful power of rumour to distort the truth is superior to freedom of the press.⁹⁴ All of these ideas echo features of Sorelian Marxism. Yet, methodologically, “capitalism” has vanished in Guha. There is nothing of the order-bestowing influence shaping events through the logic of capitalism, the methodology we typically expect of Marxism. Vivek Chibber’s *Postcolonial Theory and the Spectre of Capital* (2013) underlined Guha’s neglect of capitalism, or varying scenarios of development in capitalist economies with their corresponding narratives. Guha’s capitalism is a “universalizing mission”, a *cultural construct*, ignoring sociological and material realities. Marx never conceived universal capitalist expansion as a self-conscious “mission”, Chibber argues, but organized material-ideological structures not organized by anybody, permanently destabilizing social relationships. Guha abandons Marxian materialism for the “cultural paradigm”. The bourgeois “universalizing mission” failed in India, Guha argues, because, forced to collaborate with traditional landed power, “full revolution” (as purportedly in Europe) became impossible.

Upon the premise of opposed primordial West-East identities, Guha posits a series of binaries, firstly, in “two parallel political domains”, and, secondly, in the confrontation between the “elite and the subaltern”. This scenario suggests a distinctive Eastern capitalism. Beneath the Europeanized strata of the Indian bourgeoisie, radically incommensurate cultural visions remain indigestible to capitalism. Unable to “integrate subaltern culture into its own liberal worldview”, as “part of its hegemonic strategy”, capitalism could not “generate a coherent culture, as was achieved

93 Guha, *Elementary*, 219/191.

94 Guha, *Elementary*, 253/258/260.

in Europe”.⁹⁵ The “universal mission” failed because Indian populations resisted the “liberal modernist” cultural profile, i.e., egotistical, money-obsessed, power-hungry and progress-minded.

Chibber’s sociological counterargument charges Guha’s “universalising mission of capital” with envisioning a false historical temporality. A long revolution, transpiring over a century, is not Guha’s magically transformative flash of violence. Guha thinks in Augustinian time. Actions are evaluated only with reference to God’s fixed order, or “perfection”. Modern social revolutions require cause-consequence analysis, as Chibber indicates by highlighting their prolonged temporality and complex relation to law:

“For more than a century after the new (European) states were installed, labouring classes had to wage unceasing struggle to gain any substantial political rights—the very rights that Guha seems to associate with a hegemonic order. On his own terms, it would be hard to maintain that the chief means of stability in this period was the active consent of the poor to their place in the world. A hegemonic order, as Guha defines it, took more than a century to form.”⁹⁶

Indeed, Guha’s identification of “hegemony” with uniform “consent” presupposes the “cultural paradigm” as a way of skirting the issues of law or institution-building that Chibber is invoking. Chibber sees “hegemony” as a multcentred struggle, network alliances ceaselessly remade through revolutionized class and national belongings (i.e., the destruction of Russian industrial workers in the Civil War undermined previously successful Bolshevik mobilization strategies, through unintended demographic alteration).⁹⁷ Chibber highlights the dialectical and legal character of “hegemony”. A conflicting and circulatory dynamic explains Western Europe’s

95 Vivek Chibber. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013), 28.

96 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 88.

97 Kostas Papaioannou ed. *Les Marxistes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), 406-416.

long social revolution. Causal dispersity, not unified ontological impulsion, explain it:

“Guha does not entertain the possibility that the spread of the cultural and political forms he associates with the British and French bourgeoisie might have issued from other sources; hence, while they might have become established in the capitalist era, they would not have been brought about by capitalist design.”⁹⁸

Chibber’s description invokes what Mann has called the “patterned mess” that “constitutes real human societies”, and with which all “sociological theory must cope”.⁹⁹ Europe’s bourgeoisie neither freed the working classes nor acquired their consent. Workers achieved self-emancipation from the bourgeoisie through autonomous struggle, remaining permanently distrustful. “Hegemony” is the temporary absence of state-collapse or revolution, conflict organized through the low-level violence of institutional mediation, not least in constitutional constraints on power won through diverse self-protective mobilisations. This unstable consent, Chibber suggests, is relative, unlike Guha’s “perfectionism”. Simone Weil (1909-43), French labour organizer, saw “abstract vocabulary” replacing “superstition” in 1937. She argued that understanding capitalism required “limit, measure, degree, proportion, relation, comparison, and interdependence”. It is wrong, Weil argued, to see “capitalism” or “democracy” in terms of “absolute reality unaffected by conditions” or “absolute evil”.¹⁰⁰ Chibber’s argument follows Weil’s. Guha’s evocation of the “cultural paradigm” reveals the Heidegger-Marx frontier. It is Illich’s “ethical city”, a “common search for the good”.

Chibber considerably cracks the nut around which the Subaltern mystery revolves. Why, he asks, does Guha see capitalism and liberalism *united in intrinsic connection*? Chibber writes:

98 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 53.

99 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 2-4.

100 Simone Weil. *An Anthology* (London: Penguin, 2005), 242.

“... since (Guha’s) universalizing drive is identified with acquisition of the consent of subaltern groups, his framework generates a distinct cultural criterion for testing the extent of capital’s universalization: insofar as capital fails to promote a liberal polity, it fails in its universalizing mission”.¹⁰¹

Power is only meaning, a cultural force. This contradicts Marx, for whom capitalism established itself by any means anywhere and everywhere, with economic power as the primary force. Chibber questions the “very tight fit between the economic dimension of capitalist expansion and the generation of a new cultural and political environment.” Capitalism profitably adapted to multiple hierarchies, South African Apartheid, Southern Confederate chattel slavery, or Indian caste. The bourgeoisie is no fixed culture. Capitalism devours one ruling class to replace it with another. Although Chibber sees a false cultural inflation, he does not fully recognize the Heideggerian substratum. Guha collapses liberalism and capitalism into “modernity”, a unified and homogenous whole, an inside/out relation of the “local” to its “universal” other.

Once exposed, the following question presents itself. *Can capitalism, democracy, development, the nation, science, and the West be collapsed into a unified metaphysical impulse?* Is democracy as a practice a Western ontology, i.e., essentially cultural? Is capitalism a scientific will to the mastery of nature, i.e., essentially epistemological? All vaguely included in a worldview we call “modernity”? These are the tacit and unexamined Heideggerian assertions of post-development and the Subaltern School methodologies. It is a language for glossing complexity. It is, in this sense, the very opposite of Mann’s IMEP theory of social power, which “forms an analytical point of entry for dealing with mess”, and “seeks to make sense of mess in a way that dichotomous theories cannot”.¹⁰² If capitalism, democracy, science, the nation, development, and the West, by contrast, must be analytically differentiated, what theory meaningfully explains

101 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 51.

102 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 10, 21.

these manifold differences and interconnections, and their spectrum of ethical and existential significance?

The Chatterjee-Chibber Debate: Exposing Two Visions of Capitalism and Hegemony

The Chatterjee-Chibber public debate, “Marxism and the Legacy of Subaltern Studies”, occurred at the Historical Materialism Conference in New York in 2013. It reveals two usages of “capitalism” and “Eurocentrism”, entailing *sociological* and *ontological* concepts. Sociologically, the issue of “hegemony” means how “developmental” sequences of capitalist economies (i.e., impersonal processes) correspond to imaginative narratives, both of which jointly foster behaviour-shaping institutions: natural (Marx’s comments on irrigation and state centralisation in India), legal (systems of rights, including property rights and wage contracts to siphon wealth upward), or, following Weil, “extreme and absurd love”, such as moved Antigone to self-sacrifice.¹⁰³ These imply the concept of “hegemony” as a circle of moral consideration. They are inseparable from a society’s self-reproduction - the organized transmission of wealth and power, through gendered and patrilineal systems, the drive to amass capital, food production, or to wage war.

Let’s underscore two methodological elements underpinning this sociological conception of “hegemony”. Heilbroner differentiates between varying modes of economic and political power, from the physical punishment threatened by the state, to the comparatively modern power of the industrial employer to withdraw lifegiving support by refusing to buy labour.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Mann analyses how these different types of powers interact: “Ideological, economic, military, and political transformations and

103 Simone Weil. *An Anthology* (London: Penguin, 2005), 83.

104 Robert Heilbroner. *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* (New York: Norton, 1985), 39.

class and national struggles were multiple, entwined and developing interstitially”. Mann describes the process thus: “The whole was a nonsystemic, nondialectical process between historically given institutions and emergent interstitial forces”, where “no power actor could comprehend and take charge of everything”, and “in acting they made mistakes and generated unintended consequences”.¹⁰⁵ Methodologically, Mann notes: “The four powers are not like billiard balls, which follow their own trajectory, changing direction as they hit each other. They ‘entwine’, that is, their interactions change one another’s inner shapes as well as outward trajectories”.¹⁰⁶

Capitalism is, for Chibber, a sociological reality much in the sense described above, susceptible to objective social scientific analysis, or universal intelligibility, in the imperfect and provisional epistemological sense defined by Gaston Bachelard. Eurocentrism, like racism or sexism, is in this sense an objectively refutable convention, however much entrenched in the normalising capacities of established power. Chibber’s *comparative* sociology implies a universalism excluding right and wrong as dependent uniquely upon the society in which one lives, the autonomous moral person embodying the possibility of dissent against established social norms. It remains within the Enlightenment tradition of ethics as a critique of conventional beliefs and their associated institutions. This raises the major ethical stake in differentiating sociological and ontological conceptions of capitalism. Wolin has clearly explained this:

“... in the manner of Heidegger, who famously foreswore ‘ethics’ in favor of ‘Fundamental Ontology,’ poststructuralism, too, has a notoriously difficult time articulating an ethics. Thus, following the iconoclastic lineage established by Bataille and Nietzsche, Foucault equated ‘norms’ with ‘normalization,’ the production of pliable minds and ‘docile bodies.’ He perceived norms as little more than cogs in the mechanism of modern society qua disciplinary regime. [...] Foucault

105 Mann, 21.

106 Mann, 2.

sought to stand traditional morality on its head ... Norms retained value only in so far as they served as objects of 'transgression' or 'self-overcoming'".¹⁰⁷

Once methodology becomes centred on the "cultural paradigm", such a view of ethics becomes all but unavoidable. This methodology can be explained by its conception of power. Foucault gives "power" the "status of a metaphysical *fundamentum inconcussum*, analogous to medieval theologians' talk about God or Heidegger's invocation of the omnipotence of 'Being'".¹⁰⁸ Chatterjee, by embracing the "cultural turn" defined by "innocence" (Veyne) and "implantation" (Escobar), pioneered an ontological reading of the Indian freedom struggle and post-independence that reshaped the methodological priorities of an entire generation of scholars. It very much follows the Foucauldian model of ethics as founding a cultural paradigm through practice, which is to say, the Heideggerian innovation in "Fundamental Ontology". Chatterjee reproduces the *universal/local dichotomy* in "capital/community". An alien worldview has subconsciously contaminated millions, principally the elite, through the colonization process:

"... when all of these privileged positions are challenged with the spread of anti-colonial movements, it is the epistemic privilege which has become the last bastion of global supremacy for the cultural values of Western industrial societies".¹⁰⁹

It "has seduced, apprehended and imprisoned". Splicing Marx with Heideggerian Counter-Enlightenment, Chatterjee targets the "bourgeois-rationalist conception of knowledge, established in the post-Enlightenment period of European intellectual history." Anticipating Escobar, it is "the moral and epistemic foundation for a supposedly universal framework of thought which perpetuates, in

107 Wolin, *Seduction*, 164.

108 Wolin, *Seduction*, 42.

109 Partha Chatterjee. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse* (Delhi: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 17.

a real and not merely metaphorical sense, a colonial domination". Against this epistemic universalism, an incommensurable non-Western cultural universe characterizes Subaltern majorities. *Identity, not objectivity*, is the bedrock principle, lost in "amnesia", where to "speak in the objective voice of history is to dissimulate". The proletarian mission is transferred to the uncontaminated indigenous community, the guarantee of a "new beginning".¹¹⁰

The *social imaginary/ontology* problem is manifest in Chatterjee's depiction of Gandhi as uncontaminated by a monolithic and alien "modernity". Chatterjee uses inside/outside devices: "[Gandhi's] critique of civil society ... arises from an epistemic standpoint situated *outside* the thematic of post-Enlightenment thought."¹¹¹ Placing "outside" in italics emphasises the watertight modern-indigenous dichotomy. The same regards now "nationalism", now "the modern spirit of scientific inquiry", now "post-Enlightenment thought".¹¹² In his naïve innocence, Gandhi is appropriated by a national movement contaminated by Western "modernity". Gandhi's local purity is a microcosmic moment within the Heideggerian macrocosm, collapsing Enlightenment, science, nationalism, and other elements within a "thought, culture, and power" triad.¹¹³ The thesis, that "thought itself subjugates", derives from Foucault's Heideggerian Power-Knowledge, where a monolithic "Will to Knowledge" drives Western "culture", and "knowledge is malicious and murderous".¹¹⁴ Any justice or rights concept similarly extends an imperialistic "Will to Knowledge".

Chibber defends the universal sociological optic against Chatterjee's incommensurability thesis:

110 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 52, 170, 100.

111 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 52, 170, 100.

112 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 93, 86, 97.

113 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 25-26.

114 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 12.

“We need to understand why ... the modern experience of the East ‘could not be written as a simple application of the analytics of capital and nationalism available to Western Marxism’.”¹¹⁵

Chibber sees capitalism without intrinsic correspondence to any culture. Subaltern scholarship, he maintains, exaggerates cultural difference. It ignores systemic *institutional pressures* moulding the historical options in capital-labour relations: “It was not a particular normative order [i.e., “modernity”], but rather the subordination of economic agents to the competitive pressures of the market. Capitalism universalizes market dependence”. Chibber, in this passage, defines the main elements of capitalism as the repetitive, expansive and metamorphosing Marxian M-C-M’ process from a sociological perspective. These elements include: (1) surplus extracted in a ceaseless accumulation from the productive activities of society in the form of capital; (2) the rise of a capital-oriented class from a subordinate position to one of leverage; (3) a class of workers dependent for their livelihood on access to the tools and land that can legally be denied to them by their owners, or the system of wage labour in which workers are commodities within a web of market relations; (4) the aforementioned depends historically upon a prior process of uprooting and disembeddedness, cutting off traditional access to an independent livelihood, producing a relationship of dependency between the capitalist and propertyless classes who must sell their labour (i.e., the Enclosure Movements, the destruction of protected crafts and guilds, the 1793 Permanent Settlement); (5) a transformed role for state power in relation to wealth as a new and dominant form of power, that equally reshapes military and ideological sources of social power.¹¹⁶

Historian Bipan Chandra has distilled these five elements to two specific and necessary conditions which make the rise of capitalism possible: “the separation of producers from their conditions and

115 Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory*, 28.

116 Heilbroner, 53-78.

means of production (land and instruments of production), and the primitive accumulation of capital in the hands of capitalists ready to bring together the two again under their domination”.¹¹⁷ We needn't identify the historical emergence of capitalism with a specific culture or geography, according to Janet Abu Lughod. Her work has identified important similarities between economic systems in Asia, the Islamic world, and the West. Contrary to the myth that capitalism or a money-driven economy developed exclusively within Europe, she argues, the Abbasid and Chinese empires created capital-intensive economies that competed with one another. Muslim traders established trading posts in India, the Philippines, Malaya, the East Indies, and China.¹¹⁸

It is in this way that, through transnational *arrangements of production*, Chibber sees traditional and modern hierarchies meshed within a common history, bending local economies into correlated shapes:

“... this [market pressure] process is perfectly consistent with the phenomena that Subalternist theorists claim is specific to the colonial world but deem inconsistent with capital's universalizing tendency—the persistence of a subaltern domain, distinct from that of the elites and suffused with social hierarchies, traditional power relations, and political idioms”.¹¹⁹

Chibber thus charges the Subaltern school with a kind of Orientalism, a fantasy of Eastern otherness that defies rational comprehension. The *universal/local dichotomy*, grounded in culture, posits a false “purity” on capitalism's opposite frontier – what Guha called “the opposite side of a limit”. Chibber persuasively refutes “incommensurability”. He denies that “hegemony” corresponds to organic cultural consensus, or a “cultural paradigm”. Transformed

117 Bipan Chandra *The Writings of Bipan Chandra. The Making of Modern India. From Marx to Gandhi* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2018), 294.

118 Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 15-30.

119 Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory*, 100.

labour regimes have multiple “dialectical” linkages through military, administrative and technological revolutions, in any society enthralled by the organising principle of capitalism. As prestige and power are reconstructed through alternating stratifications of wealth accumulation, capital as “self-expanding value” reconfigures local cultures as it reembodies power. This pluralistic sociological reasoning is far in its understanding of power from power as the “Will to Knowledge”.

Chatterjee and Chibber stand upon the shoulders of Nietzsche (“purity”) and Marx (“dialectic”) respectively in defining the political science term “hegemony”. Both make the term central to their argument on capitalism. Let’s consider how Gramsci originally articulated the concept. In fact, Gramsci was preoccupied with separating Marxian theory from determinism, and relatedly to explaining failed revolutions and the rise of fascism in the 1930s. Gramsci saw “dialectical”, not “ontological”, “hegemony”, in “spontaneous” underclass “consent” triggered by elite “prestige in the world of production”. The control system of a centralized economy (telephone, transport, industry), merely by functioning, instils awe in the population. The seductive dream recurrently disintegrates in the unstable world of production. The “apparatus of state coercive power” therefore abets “hegemony” in “moments of crisis”, when “spontaneous consent has failed” amidst perpetual dissolution and recapture of capital.¹²⁰ This is clearly a dialectical argument, much as Eric Williams described how capitalists first encouraged West Indian slavery and then helped to destroy it, following the organizing force of profit through contradictory moral claims and mind states.¹²¹

Chibber similarly suggests how, because multiple ideologies can reinforce a regime of capital, it never sustains unchallenged

120 Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2004), 12-13.

121 Eric Williams. *Capitalism and slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2014), 126-135.

unity. Elite insiders subvert open politics to guarantee vast industrial prosperity for themselves in perpetual boom and bust cycles. Yet elites, in unselfconsciously held views, link the search for profit to universal moral truth to secure legitimacy. This is how “hegemony” grows out of production-distribution relations. Relatedly, as capitalists want to portray the system as “natural”, Fascism tries to persuade populations that “pure” identity is a reality and not merely an imaginary fiction. Trust and belief establish a “hegemonic” scenario, implying a *communicative principle* of indeterminacy, complexity and ambiguity. This concords with Mann’s central contention concerning the meaning for power of the Industrial Revolution:

“The Industrial Revolution did not homogenize; rather, it modernized disparate regime strategies. The boost to collective powers provided by the revolution could be used by any regime – party democratic or despotic, centralized or confederal - to amplify its initial characteristics. Outcomes depended on both domestic politics and geopolitics. So did the undoubted overall movement toward the centralized nation-state. Regimes competed, flourished and perished according to domestic class and national power struggles, diplomatic alliances, wars, international economic rivalry, and ideological claims.”¹²²

This passage by Mann may seem to shade into description. However, it is underpinned by his “polymorphous” theory of the state, which sees modern states having “crystallized, often messily, in four main forms – as capitalist, as militarist, and with differing solutions to representative and national issues”.¹²³ Indeed, the methodology implied by “polymorphous” state theory appears closer to what Gramsci meant by “hegemony” as a problem for modern states. Gramsci’s *relational* state/civil everydayness negates the underlying organicism of Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, where rigid definitions determine the course of future events: “the state is

122 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 20.

123 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 5.

an instrument for the suppression of one class by another”; it follows that “the state is not abolished, it withers away” (once the two contending classes have been reduced to one by the revolution, there will be only the unified interests of a single class).¹²⁴ Imprisoned in 1926, Gramsci saw “inevitability” disintegrate with Fascist victory. The Southern Italian peasant class, similarly, would not vanish by “inevitability”. This also implied a creative, affirmative mobilization of popular forces within existing democracies, winning mass consent for socialism, the “hegemonic” question ignored by Soviet “inevitability” dogma.¹²⁵ Socialist transition may involve multiple *links* between representative democracy and popular activism (i.e., party-state alliances, multi-class networks, public action).¹²⁶ The mass “prestige” of production can be turned against excessive wealth concentration through scientific education, overthrowing an unjust production mode. This is a matter of political “form” rather than cultural “content”, because progressive institution-building secures an egalitarian order. Gramscian “hegemony” described institutional capabilities failure, not a unifying worldview. It was a *conjunctural* theory, where modernization detached “social classes” from “traditional parties”, diminishing traditional military and religious prestige as societies “adapted” to “new tasks and new epochs”, in multiplying administrative and educational institutions.¹²⁷ It can be said that Gramsci tried to articulate a multi-axial theory of capitalism and socialist revolution that excluded the confident inevitability that had characterised Lenin’s writings. Gramsci therefore also tacitly raised the question of the moral person, not the solitary individual of Liberal myth, but as an activist participating in forging a collective social destiny.

124 V.I. Lenin. *State and Revolution* (Delhi: General Press: 2021), 22, 79.

125 Tom Bottomore, et.al. eds. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 133-34.

126 Chantal Mouffe, ed. *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1979), 212.

127 Gramsci, 210-211.

Chibber similarly emphasises “intellectuals” or the “moral person”. He describes them as comparatively analysing diverse sociological landscapes, pursuing transformative possibilities for public action. Chibber charges Subaltern arguments with lacking the comparative grounding for this task. Chatterjee’s alternative order of Foucauldian facts rejects appeals to evidence or comparison as an imperialistic epistemology.¹²⁸ Only comparative analysis, Chibber contends, can assess success or failure, implying the comparative - not perfectionist - optic for assessing the crystallisation of laws, gained through long historical struggle and fostering collective power, that we might call institutional-capabilities. Understanding “hegemony” requires that we “adduce cases [of] hegemony over subaltern classes” to know “what hegemony looks like when it actually obtains”. A “failure” in “nation-building”, Chibber writes, must be “judged against historical cases that can be taken as standards”.¹²⁹ Chibber sees “hegemony” as ordinary power struggle without end:

“Absent a real historical benchmark, there is no way to assess whether the Indian record is one of relative success or failure—could it not be that the Indian experience just happens to be what hegemony looks like?”¹³⁰

Chibber has removed the religious kernel that has sustained the tradition of messianic Marxism, based on faith and arcane mental constructs, and often wedded to a futile obsession with redemptive violence. This can only disappoint Guha’s “transcendence” and “perfection”, or the organicism of uniform values and interests that essentially underpinned the Leninist utopia of a “stateless society” after the revolution. Is society without exit from ordinary power, even when transfigured by revolution? Are revolutions ultimately banal, producing problems as solutions? Although

128 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 5.

129 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 34

130 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 34.

20th century revolutions suggest this, it hardly refutes revolution. Rather, revolutions require scientific analysis to learn from historical experiences. The relatively rare occurrence of any revolution is not “inevitability”, but the occasion for cause-consequence analysis, and correspondingly requiring scientific transformation of popular consciousness if it is to realise any significant degree of success. This is a dialogic process, in a future-oriented secular realm where discussion of concrete consequences provides the only viable underpinning for an ethics of institutional reconstruction.

Chatterjee’s *Nationalism*, by contrast, recasts the Gramscian “passive”/ “full revolution” duality as ontological designations, explaining a “blocked dialectic” remote from Gramsci’s sociologically nuanced terms.¹³¹ This “blocked dialectic” argument somewhat resembles Frantz Fanon’s passage on “national consciousness”, where he argues that a weak and unevolved national bourgeoisie in the colonial context can never bring prosperity to the country in the aftermath of independence, as the bourgeoisie brought wealth and civilization to European colonial powers. It is blocked by its own weakness as a class and unabashedly borrowed Western cultural conceits, and by its lack of meaningful education. The national bourgeoisie in the colonial context can therefore only enrich itself parasitically by preying upon the impoverished national population while aligned with transnational capital after independence. Fanon’s argument is different, however, because he still holds fiercely to the ideals of national development in prosperity and freedom for everyone as the ultimate aim of the mass struggle, as well as national stature in the geopolitical context.¹³² Chatterjee, by contrast, rejects these very ideals as part of a Western episteme that is the source of continued colonial subjugation following independence.

There is a pathos of revived Marxian “inevitability” in Chatterjee’s account, implying predetermined results. Chatterjee retains the utopian kernel of a Marxian promise “of a new beginning”:

131 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 46.

132 Frantz Fanon. *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris: Découverte, 2002), 168.

“Marx was convinced that capital in its global form had reached a stage where it was definitely ‘against science and enlightened reason’ and he saw even in the ‘archaic’ resistance of the popular masses in countries still not enslaved by capital the possibility of a new beginning. Thus, much that has been suppressed in the historical creation of post-colonial nation-states, much that has been glossed over when nationalist discourse has set down its own life history, bear the marks of the people-nation struggling in an inchoate, undirected and wholly unequal battle”.¹³³

Yet, upon examination, Chatterjee slides the Heideggerian “History of Being” beneath a thin Marxian blanket. The Marx-Heideggerian fusion is accomplished. Chatterjee’s core argument adopts the counter-Enlightenment convention, that, however paradoxically viewed at a superficial level, unites the worldviews of German protofascists in the 1930s and 1960s French postmodernism.¹³⁴ The purpose of the utopian vision invoked by Chatterjee is to “challenge the presumed sovereignty of science”.¹³⁵ The “people-nation” is the culturally authentic nation, as opposed to the dominant national construct contaminated by the Western episteme. What is “suppressed” and “glossed over” refers to cultural amnesia about being (certainly not historical facts), and must be retrieved in a revivalist manner by the masses described as an “inchoate” and “undirected” force, precisely the mystical primordiality we find celebrated as the source of authentic revolution from Sorel to Klossowski, from Bataille to Foucault. Cultural authenticity is “agency”, the antithesis of Gramscian enlightened social activism (“be one’s own guide”).¹³⁶ The Gramsci-Chibber debate highlighted the centrality of the “scientific temper” in the sprawling disorganization of divergent flows within the Marxist methodological tradition.

Regarding Gramscian “fundamental forces of transformation”,

133 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 170.

134 Wolin, *Seduction*, 155.

135 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 170.

136 Gramsci, 323.

and Chatterjee's claim of a "blocked dialectic", Chibber asks: transformation into what? What is the fruit of an unblocked dialectic? The Soviet Union or Communist China? Are these instances of full Proletarian revolutions? And, if so, what a disappointment, for neither has attained dialectical closure, ensconced in the modern capitalist dynamics and state terror. Is the fulfilled dialectic only a myth, a floating utopia, without institutional grounding? Chibber seemingly suggests that we need to pragmatically rethink the objective meaning of revolution as a historical reality, and to dispense with ahistorical methodologies which treat revolution as a millennial object of faith. It would seem that institution-building and law are the kernel of the matter rather than messianic dreams of transformative violence as worthwhile in itself.

We have seen that Chatterjee only invokes a mysterious "new beginning". The mystery unravels in Heideggerian time, "one Great Event", "dividing up historical time into past and future, tradition and modernity, stagnation and development". Its "spectacular changes in the techno-economic conditions of production" are "attributed the quality of essences which are said to characterize Western cultures as a whole".¹³⁷ The multiple technological revolutions in Gramsci's multi-axial vision are reduced to one universalizing expression of a Western cultural impulse. Chatterjee pits a "world-conquering Western thought [against] the intellectual modes of non-Western cultures" (i.e., innocence). He sees an ontological depth at which nationalist thought "cannot constitute an autonomous discourse". Chatterjee thereby condemns the entire Indian nation-making political spectrum as contaminated, "confined to the Enlightenment view of rationality and progress and the historical values enshrined in that view".¹³⁸ Both "conservatives and progressives were equally prisoners of this rationalism, historicism and scientism of the nationalist thematic". The "thematic" can "apply a closure on the range of possibilities", leaving "many possibilities ignored and some

137 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 16, 25.

138 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 10.

not even recognized".¹³⁹ Who is this obscure puppet master, the "thematic"? What "uncontaminated" perspective can even recognize it? Chibber interprets the "thematic" as the "deeper, metatheoretical framework used to generate and defend claims".¹⁴⁰

"Metatheoretical frameworks", however, scarcely drive the actions of millions, as Chatterjee's argument implies. "Implantation", Chatterjee all but argues, has determined the events of both colonialism and independence. India's post-independence government are collaborators, due to the "implantation into new cultures of categories and frameworks of thought produced in other – alien – cultural contexts". This "meant, and indeed still means, a continued period of 'collaboration' with the West." "Innocence" was the victim, in the "appropriation of peasant support" and the "passive revolution of capital". Nehruvian "development discourse" is condemned for applying the "subject-object" epistemology, "specific to modern industrial society in the West".¹⁴¹ Heidegger defined "fundamental ontology" as "the possibility to be oneself or not oneself", either "chosen", "stumbled upon", or "grown up in", and the "manner of seizing or neglecting such possibilities".¹⁴² This hermeneutical argument – the lost self - strays methodologically from Marxian sociology. The world becomes a text, which is why the "inchoate" masses "bear the marks", and there is a call to "change the thematic" as the preliminary revolutionary action making any significant change possible.¹⁴³ Chatterjee's "thematic" is not a causal argument, in the sociological sense, of "causal logic" as the "logic of situations, of human outcomes".¹⁴⁴ It is an existential claim about "authentic" identity lost in the colonial aftermath. The autonomous moral person is Chatterjee's first casualty:

139 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 8-10, 41-43, 80.

140 Chibber, *Postcolonial*, 28-53.

141 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 37, 27, 81, 14.

142 Heidegger, *BT*, 10.

143 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 170.

144 Heilbroner, 25.

“Nationalism sets out to assert its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its project, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European fashions ... Thought itself subjugates”.¹⁴⁵

Modernity is “the epistemic privilege which is due to ‘scientific truth’”, now “appropriated by entire cultures”. Embodied in Western culture “as a whole”, it casts “every other culture into the darkness of unscientific traditionalism” based on “post-Enlightenment theories of progress”.¹⁴⁶ What is Marxism without “progress” or “reason”? In Chatterjee’s universal-local “derivative” thesis, *purity* is at stake. “Elite discourse” is “contaminated”.¹⁴⁷

As an important pioneer in Marxian methodology, Chatterjee strikes a Luther-like pose. Luther broke the universal power of Rome, championing the true (not decadent, corrupt, Renaissance modulated) faith. Chatterjee ruptures the weak sovereignty of a liberalized, Westoxicated, sociological Marxism, based on Guha’s teachings. Marx is alchemically fused with Heidegger, and sociological capitalism (as Marx intended it) metamorphoses into nebulous cultural ‘modernity’. A new Heideggerian meaning arises in “homogenous empty time”, the “sociological determinism” of the “liberal dilemma”.¹⁴⁸ Marxism, which shared important overlapping elements with Liberal Enlightenment, has newly become its antithesis in fusing with the tradition of counter-Enlightenment.

Guided by Chatterjee’s hand, Marx and Heidegger are braided together. Ceaseless cultural appropriation explains the universal expansion of capital. Ultimately, Marx the sociologist, and Heidegger the hermeneutician, cannot cohabitate within one theoretical optic. One must die. Chatterjee makes his choice, however unconsciously. Marx the sociologist dies. Heidegger survives, growing stronger, while Marx reincarnates as a millennial prophet at the close of *Nationalism*. A lost page from his last writings prophesies that the

145 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 10, 12, 17.

146 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 10, 12, 17.

147 Ranajit Guha, ed. *A Subaltern Reader* (Delhi: OUP, 1998), xv.

148 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 1-54.

non-Western indigenous shall usher in a “new beginning”. There is no explanation as to how this magical event must transpire. The authority of the master’s words suffices, as if Marx were a religious cult leader and not a sociologist. Where does this leave the dialectic? India is “trapped in an unresolved contradiction”, in “objectifying procedures of knowledge constructed in the post-Enlightenment age of Western science”.¹⁴⁹ The central contradiction is the “divergence between the *modern* and the *national*”, an essentially cultural contradiction.¹⁵⁰ Marx’s ‘systematic dialectic’, which critically analysed economic ideas from within, moving from abstract to more concrete categories, is now principally concerned with diagnosing “contamination”: “Nationalism sets out to assert its freedom from European domination. But in the very conception of its project, it remains a prisoner of the prevalent European fashions”. The dialectic has become the History of Being. The “post-Enlightenment view of the world” and “rational knowledge” concern “man’s control over nature”. Modern science is the culprit. Just as Foucault argued, knowledge has but one aim in seeking “domination of the world”.¹⁵¹

By inverting epistemology and ontology, Chatterjee promotes a nebulous *politics of being*: “Science is embedded in a wider mode of being, i.e., ‘way of life’”. He describes his plight as “the cultural predicament of one whose practice of science” means “separation from his own people”.¹⁵² The enemy – no longer capitalism - is “the superior cognitive status of the criteria of scientific rationality”.¹⁵³ As in Foucauldian “implantation”, “a parasite invests a body” through “bio-power”.¹⁵⁴ Little remains of Marxian dialectic in Chatterjee’s methodological innovation. Chatterjee’s unifying

149 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 80, 38-39.

150 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 81.

151 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 14-15.

152 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 16, 53.

153 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 41, 17, 13.

154 Foucault, *Reader*, 21.

collapse of capitalism, democracy, the nation and science into “modernity” replaces any nuanced sociological conception of a gamut of institutional pressures from representative pressures of classes and nations, geopolitical and national pressures, military-fiscal pressures, interest group pressures, economic pressures, etc. The enemy is the “urge for modernization” and the “liberal-rationalist”.¹⁵⁵ “History” is mere “discourse” immune to intelligible consequential analysis: “A historical discourse, unfortunately, can only struggle with its own terms. Its evolution will be determined by history itself”.¹⁵⁶ “History” is the futile elite space of competing discourses, a self-contained whirlwind of clashing paper realities from which no learning is possible. The survival of an “inevitable” master plan is “history itself”, an advancing multitude impervious to reason, the innocent *other* of “discursive history”. “Agency” is thereby disconnected from informational basis, and thus rational options. In the “Marxism and the Legacy of Subaltern Studies” in 2013, Chibber defended the *structuralist and humanist* aspect of the Marxian legacy. Its core is the interdependency of “informational basis” and “agency”, central to Sen’s “capabilities”, in the communicative principle.¹⁵⁷ These discussions bring us nearer to retrieving the core meaning of the “scientific temper”, which is key to understanding India’s paradoxical national independence movement and post-independence goals of economic growth and elimination of social disparities.

Meera Nanda: The “Scientific Temper” Debate and the 20th Century Structuralist Revolution

The 20th century structuralist methodology derives from political nightmare. Durkheim, a French Jew, seeing the deadly antisemitism of the Dreyfus conundrum, initiated the 1895

155 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 3.

156 Chatterjee, *Nationalist*, 162.

157 Amartya Sen. *Development as Freedom* (New Delhi: Oxford, 2007), 147.

structuralist revolution, valorising the sociological lifeworld, cause-consequence analysis, and humanist demystification of traditional power. Durkheim's multi-axial sociology – economies, technologies, organizations, populations, collective norms, and “social imaginings” – emphasized transindividual structures in the flux of relational interactions. In *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), Durkheim explains the concept of collective representations:

“That the matter of social life cannot be explained by purely psychological factors, that is, by states of individual consciousness, is self-evident. Collective representations reflect the ways groups think in relational mode to objects which impact social life”.¹⁵⁸

Dissolving 19th century Liberal *ontological individualism* as a methodological priority, Durkheimian structuralism remained committed to *ethical individualism* - in human freedom and rights – as an ethical priority. Durkheim conceived a middle way for the Enlightenment legacy, defining rationality as social, not absolute, while rejecting the thesis of reason as merely a facet of local culture.¹⁵⁹ He linked institutionalised systems with varied societal interactions, exchange patterns, and collective sentiments, positing a double concept of “institutions” at the centre of sociological methodology: “In the present state of sociological science, we are genuinely ignorant about such principle social institutions as the State or the family, property rights and contract, punishment and responsibility”.¹⁶⁰ Institutions are partly concrete and tangible, contained physically within a synchronic slice of the present, but mostly concealed in their meaning within a hidden and irretrievable diachronic expanse of past time:

158 Emile Durkheim. *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), 32.

159 Ken Thompson. *Emile Durkheim* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 14-15.

160 Durkheim, 28.

“We inherit the vast majority of social institutions readymade by prior generations; we have taken no part in their formation. Consequently, no self-analysis will permit discovery of the causes that engendered them. Moreover, even when we have collaborated in their creation, we can barely glimpse in even the most confused and inaccurate manner, the real reasons behind our actions and the meaning of our actions. Even in our simplest private activities, we have only a very weak grasp on the reasons which guide our daily conduct.”¹⁶¹

The rejection of unique origins to explain being in the present was the kernel of the structuralist revolution, and went against both ideologies of ethnic nationalism and religious revivalism, as well as the Golden Age rhetoric that had always underpinned the identities of countries like England (i.e., the Norman Yoke narrative). Ferdinand Saussure, the second major voice in the structuralist revolution, made rejecting the illusion of perfect origins central to the *Course on General Linguistics* (1916): “An illusion very characteristic of our age is to see in the original state of language something superior and perfect”.¹⁶² A given language state is a system of arbitrary signs whose signifying properties depend entirely on their place within the system. The system is forever changing. Saussure saw a disturbing randomness beneath the surface of the universal order established by the 18th century Enlightenment. This randomness, for Saussure, had long been covered up in linguistic scholarship by unscientific fantasies passed off as serious knowledge. In 19th century historical linguistics, linguistic comparisons frequently encompassed considerable imaginary time spans, based on the “organicist conception of language” where all languages “belong to the same kind” - e.g., Greek and Sanskrit. All languages, in this imaginary trajectory, undergo identical developmental stages, just as would plants of the same species. For Saussure, the comfort of a ‘universal’ and ‘natural’ explanation, a cosmic sanction, became

161 Durkheim, 27.

162 Ferdinand Saussure. *Cours de Linguistique Generale* (Paris: Payot, 1995), 223.

methodologically problematic. The “sign” could not be understood as a natural object upon any sound methodological basis, instead requiring recognition as a social product. Collingwood has described the pre-Saussurian universalist project as “this impulse towards arranging the whole of history in a single scheme”.¹⁶³ It is impossible to detach such holistic fantasies from the contemporary realities of global Empire. The all-unifying organicist conception of time, with the structuralist revolution, had taken a severe blow. Change in human societies is by implication a substantially blind process, its causal mechanisms rooted in a partially impenetrable oblivion that can only carefully applied scientific method can shed light on as positive and objective knowledge.

The methodological rejection of synchronic and diachronic oneness common to Durkheim and Saussure was really a deconstruction of Theodicy, a call to see the transmission of cultural identity not as a linear or unbroken process, but as a discontinuous reproduction of different but interrelated elements without necessarily forming a whole. Saussure redefined language as a convention, in contrast to the Biblical image of the animals named in Eden at the beginning of time: “The majority of philosophical conceptions make one think of Adam calling the animals before him and giving them names”.¹⁶⁴ Crucially, “the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary”.¹⁶⁵ The signifier/signified dichotomy goes to the heart of the problem of time in Saussure’s thought because it explains why change happens. Conventions are adrift upon an ocean of time. The methodological innovation of temporal discontinuity ruled out holistic terms for identity and being as simply a myth, seeing interrelationships among conjoined structures which are distinct and relatively autonomous.

163 R.G. Collingwood. *The Idea of History* (1946) (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 264.

164 David Holdcroft. *Saussure: signs, systems and arbitrariness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11

165 Saussure, 100.

The structuralist revolution, optimistically starting with the democratic Dreyfus resolution, ended so badly, with the Third Reich, and the murder of French resistance member Marc Bloch (1886-1944), Durkheim's heir in historical structuralism, under the Vichy regime. Bloch's awakening had occurred as a soldier on the World War I front, amidst "the atrocious nausea of military encirclement on the battlefield and of military defeat at home". It inspired him to posit a modest conception of time as every methodological starting point: "Whether consciously or not, it is always from our everyday experiences, reconstructed where necessary, that we ultimately borrow the elements which permit any historian to reconstruct the past".¹⁶⁶ Our knowledge of the past is always limited to ensembles of painstakingly recovered "traces" from out of "oblivion".¹⁶⁷ Bloch insisted that such historical work was a struggle against harmful "prejudices", that is, it is an ethical as well as epistemic undertaking.¹⁶⁸ A new modernism was born from the structuralist revolution, voiced by Durkheim, Saussure and Bloch in terms of a methodology of temporal discontinuity. This anti-omniscience provided the foundations for Bloch's "progressive-regressive" methodology: "Incomprehension of the present is born fatally from ignorance of the past. It is, however, no less vain to seek an understanding of the past in ignorance of present realities".¹⁶⁹ This discontinuous temporal conjuncture made the work of the historian forever unfinished, a site of "permanent transformation".¹⁷⁰

In contrast to the first structuralist revolution, centred on critical-analytical method and democratic social ideals, the World War I experience also sired a strong cultural movement championing the authority of tradition over individual reason. Gadamer wrote:

166 Marc Bloch. *Apologie pour l'histoire* (Malakoff: Ekho, 2020), 94-95.

167 Bloch, 112-113.

168 Bloch, 114.

169 Bloch, 93.

170 Bloch, 110.

“History does not belong to us, but we belong to it ... the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being”.¹⁷¹ In Graham Greene’s *The Third Man* (1949), the Ferris Wheel in occupied, devastated, and crime-ridden post-war Vienna symbolizes the inevitability of evil returns. Anti-modern despair and nostalgia emerged in this spirit, siring a second structuralist stream, with opposite tendencies: anti-critical, purist, it celebrated traditional lifeworlds as higher existential truth. The enemy of human happiness was modern science. Communism had always adopted the perspective of the most oppressed, while considering it distorted by oppressive experience and requiring scientific correction. The radical Left and the anti-modernist streams eventually converged, celebrating pre-modern “innocence” while reducing scientific evidence to one cultural perspective. The “social imaginary” yielded to “ontology”.

The second structuralism was the pioneering deconstructive method of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927), a removal of a thousand years of “Western rationality” to retrieve the “pure sources”. Heidegger lent this philosophy to counter-Enlightenment in the German aspiration to unique “destiny” under Nazism. “Purism” emerged from European 1930s organicism. The second structuralism rejected both 19th century Liberal *ontological individualism* and the *ethical individualism* underpinning human rights, rejecting the modern equality principle traceable to the French Revolution. Anti-modernism was later embraced in the 1960s French intellectual climate by Left intellectuals disgusted with the De Gaulle legacy, the secular Republic, Enlightenment rationality, colonialism, and Communist state-building, collapsing them into one unified “Western” impulse called “modernity”.¹⁷² The two structuralisms provide the key to understanding the sometimes arcane “development” debate at the centre of the methodologies already examined in this chapter.

171 Wolin, *Seduction*, 102.

172 Wolin, *Seduction*, 2.

Meera Nanda renewed the “development” debate in *Prophets Facing Backwards* (2003). Nanda, invoking Sen, criticized India’s postmodern Left (i.e., the Subaltern school and Ashis Nandy). From a northern Indian town, Nanda saw the Left linking modern science and egalitarian justice. This had revolutionized her perspective on the religious-cosmological traditions of her upbringing.¹⁷³ Nanda re-examined the “scientific temper” debate related to Dewey’s “social efficiency”, which had inspired Ambedkar’s attack on caste as a “social imaginary”, not a cosmic “ontology”. She linked Dewey’s “American experience” to Ambedkar’s vision of Indian social reconstruction, an experience less of enduring liberty than the horror and social transformation of the American Civil War (1861-65) – the struggle of African Americans to become citizens, not slaves according to the cosmic ontology of the Confederacy and pervasive American racism.¹⁷⁴

Nanda situated India’s “scientific temper” debate after the 1975 Emergency. She argues that, “with the demise of the Nehruvian consensus”:

“...movements for alternative science and development began to connect with the anti-Enlightenment, postmodernist strains that had been growing in Western universities since the mid-1960s ... In the closing decade of the twentieth century, these movements were joined by the movement for Hindutva”.¹⁷⁵

The Indira Gandhi “combination of authoritarianism and populism” provoked a “backlash from a right-left coalition”. It condemned “the ‘imported’ ideals of industrial development, liberal democracy, and secularism”. “Total revolution” required the “return of the country to its own traditions”. Nanda writes: “The ‘scientific temper debate’ was the beginning of the end of the intellectual consensus in India over the ideals of a secular modernity”. She saw

173 Nanda, xxi.

174 Nanda, 185.

175 Nanda, 4.

“the beginning of the grand betrayal of the clerks in India”, rejecting a “liberal political culture”.¹⁷⁶ Nanda recalls from student life:

“In 1980, a ‘Statement on Scientific Temper’ was published to announce a conference organized by the Nehru centre. Ashis Nandy replied in 1981 with the ‘Counterstatement on Humanistic Temper’, rejecting the ‘hegemony of science’ in favour of ‘science as only one of the many imperfect traditions of humankind’. It made a case for ‘epistemic parity’ (modern science as only one among other ways of knowing) and populism (the right to live by one’s own traditions). India needed to protect itself from the ‘obscene and amoral logic of science’”.¹⁷⁷

Nanda sees a dangerous elective affinity uniting postmodern utopianism and Hindutva. This observation correlates to Wolin’s: “One of the crucial elements underlying this problematic right-left synthesis is a strange chapter in the history of ideas whereby latter-day anti-philosophes such as Nietzsche and Heidegger became the intellectual idols of post-World War II France - above all, for poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze. Paradoxically, a thoroughgoing cynicism about reason and democracy, once the hallmark of reactionary thought, became the stock-in-trade of the postmodern left”.¹⁷⁸ As Wolin notes, “Heidegger’s thought betrays a residual ‘foundationalism’ [in] nostalgia for ‘home’, ‘place,’ and ‘authenticity’”.¹⁷⁹ Citing Chatterjee, Nanda questions the centrality of the “authenticity” category:

“Why this obsession with authenticity? The nation states that emerged after the overthrow of colonialism, on this account, won their political economic freedom at the cost of their losing their authenticity – their unique *gestalts*. Modern India (which stands in for all non-Western

176 Nanda, 214-5, 207-209.

177 Nanda, 211.

178 Wolin, *Seduction*, 4.

179 Wolin, *Seduction*, 220.

postcolonial societies) is a 'derivative discourse of colonialism', because it accepts the 'sovereignty of science'.¹⁸⁰

Nanda targets the Heideggerian lamentation of the "imperialistic hegemony of a secularized culture in this godless age, when all magic and wonder has disappeared". She condemns culturalist claims that "true and false are simply idioms for expressing cultural preferences of the community", with "rationality as obeying community standards". Nanda defends the "superior explanatory power of materialist analysis". She opposes the "romantic understanding" of the "scientific worldview as a source of oppression", which celebrates the "peasant's worldview as liberatory".¹⁸¹ Nanda hits the target in the Marx-Heidegger fusion. She affirms the "social imaginary" against "ontology".

Nanda's intervention, by rejecting the simplifying universal/local dichotomy, opens the complex question – that we saw earlier in terms of multi-axial and IMEP methodologies - of how to analyse transnational linkages. Rejecting Heideggerian "homelessness and nihilism" in a world "devoid of preordained meanings", Nanda identifies a transnational conjuncture defining post-colonial societies:

"While the religious right remains a constant threat in advanced capitalist societies, it is, by and large, confined to the margins. The situation is very different in modernizing societies – as Germany and Italy were in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and India is today. These societies were caught in a moment in development of capitalism and democracy when the older modes of economic reproduction and social legitimation are in decay and the new ones have not fully replaced them."¹⁸²

Nanda's analysis privileges a certain relation between the scope of ideological power and the fragility of political power in

180 Nanda, 8, 168.

181 Nanda, 177, 131, 226.

182 Nanda, 80, 13.

the weakly rooted democratic modern state. This argument has been made elsewhere by Mirsepassi with regard to the Middle Eastern context, saying that weakly rooted legal and representative institutions make a state more prone to the risk of ideological threats which mobilise the demagogic power of empty promises (i.e., they do not explain how these promises are possible) of more of everything for everyone:

“Political Islamic movements arose in the Middle East at the same time that secular states were in crisis. Modern states suffered from the lack of popular legitimation. [...] Modern Middle Eastern states rarely, if ever, enjoyed popular legitimacy based on popular will and legal processes. Most of these states are the results of coups d’etat or some other form of violent, non-popular action. For these reasons, modern and secular-democratic institutions in the Middle East have usually enjoyed only a fragile foundation, and could hardly stand any serious challenge.”¹⁸³

Secondly, Nanda sees an epistemological problem internal to Marxism having forced a detour into Heideggerianism. There have been “critiques of scientificity and positivism of the Soviet brand of Marxism”, claiming “a law-like movement in history”. These critiques “spread to the very idea of scientific law, or scientific fact”. Following the Frankfurt School, the “radical epistemological critique of science gradually overtook the political critique” in post-structuralism.¹⁸⁴ Nanda has identified a germinal moment in the Marx-Heidegger fusion. It espouses the “valorization of the subjective experience of oppression as a source of more objective knowledge” (i.e., ontology). A non-interventionist ethic, the “peasant who understands the world in terms of ghosts and spirits has nothing to learn from modern science”. Nanda exposes its contradiction: “Epistemologies that treat values derived from oppression as truth-enhancing can end up shielding the very sources of the oppression from critical examination.”¹⁸⁵ Postmodern “tolerance” supports

183 Mirsepassi, *Intellectual*, 189.

184 Nanda, 22.

185 Nanda, 155, 185.

the religious fundamentalist politics that defends the traditional domination of the powerful.

If cultural beliefs were merely beautiful dreams, Nanda suggests, severed from the everyday realities of historically entrenched hierarchic power, noninterventionism might be suitable. It is not the case. Nanda therefore rejects postmodern claims that “the purported value-freedom and objectivity of science is a rude and brutal cultural intrusion”. She condemns the following template of Heideggerian explanation: “the West was able to control the Orient by ‘worlding’ the subject peoples by substituting their version of reality with its own mode of understanding and structuring the world”.¹⁸⁶ We have seen how this “implantation” template characterises post-development and Subaltern arguments. Nanda is realizing a wider accomplishment that transcends Indian politics. She defends the radical Left project – secular and sociological transformation to overcome poverty and oppression – from Heideggerian calls that “nothing must be done”. Never naming Heidegger, Nanda cites his distinct idiom (“homelessness and nihilism”, “worlding”, “a world devoid of preordained meanings”). Rejecting “innocence”, she condemns Foucauldian power/knowledge with its tacit universal/local construction.

Nanda therefore partakes of a view of power as sociological (institutionally embedded networks), not ontological (universal/local purities). In the Nehru era, Nanda differentiates antinomous sources of social power: “The arrival of democracy and universal suffrage gives the disaffected masses a *political power*, based upon their great numbers, which is disproportionate to their *economic power*”.¹⁸⁷ Again, Nanda’s argument supports the IMEP framework, analysing alterations in distributive power resulting from institutionalised mass franchise that must be understood within the context of a country where two-thirds of the population live in dire poverty: 68.8% of Indians live on less than \$2 a day, while over

186 Nanda, 181, 153.

187 Nanda, 13.

30% have less than \$1.25 per day available. Clearly, the two sources of power interact. The interaction of political and economic sources of power can illuminate the causal logic of ideological power. Nanda sees Hindutva *ideology* expressing vested interests in a hierarchic capital-labour conjuncture, even as populist ideologues declare their campaign to be about “ontology”:

“The Green Revolution has created a large mass of upwardly mobile, middle to small capitalist farmers who have made tremendous economic gains, but who are also threatened by the breakdown of traditional caste relations which they depended upon for super-exploitation of the landless, mostly untouchable and tribal farm workers. These capitalist farmers are segmented in terms of their caste, regional, and linguistic affiliations. The language of religious nationalism cuts across these divisions ... This unified Hindu identity, however, has a dark side, full of suspicion and anger at the ‘enemy’ within – Muslims and Christians whose religions did not grow from the soil of India”.¹⁸⁸

In interacting *political, economic* and *ideological* power sources, Nanda details the complex sociology of Indian “development”. She spurns the postmodern vogue for using “development” as synonymous with the “devil”: “despair over modernization is totally disproportionate to the actual facts on the ground”. Although India’s “development” crisis is tragically real, anti-modernism falsely accounts for its causes and conditions. As of November 2001, over:

“200 million persons were unable to meet their basic caloric needs, and 47 % of children suffered from chronic malnutrition. 300 million of India’s people are still illiterate, including 54 % of ‘untouchable’ males and 80% of all “untouchable” females. Dismal statistics like this give ammunition to critics. But economic data also reveals slow but substantial improvement, not just of incomes but of human development indices as well. In 1973, 55 % of Indians lived below the poverty line. The 2001 census finds about 25% living below the poverty line.”¹⁸⁹

188 Nanda, 13.

189 Nanda, 31.

The reality is nuanced, a volatile combination of progression and regression, oppression and emancipation. Nanda gives a devastating critique of the failings of post-independence Indian “development”. Yet she debunks the false and harmful post-development argument that the “one common enemy of human emancipation” is “the modern age itself”. Nanda alerts us: the Left is divided from within. Nanda writes: “two decades of combined assault on secular thought and scientific reason by those seeking alternatives to modernity have created currents and eddies that pushed the civil society along in the direction of the religious right”. Post-development “intellectuals in India and in Western academia, who have embraced a wholesale critique of the very principles of modernization, . . . claim to speak for the amorphous mass of the non-modern ‘people’”. Meanwhile, they adopt “the standpoint of the traditional elites who feel threatened by the new cultural attitudes and the demands of their traditional subordinates”. Without anti-modernist intellectuals, “it is unlikely that popular discontent would have taken the religious nationalist turn it has taken.”¹⁹⁰

Nanda therefore identifies an elective affinity linking postmodern academia and Hindutva politics. Nandy’s “furious tracts against secularism” reduced it “to an imported ideology of Westernized elites, out of touch with the simple faith of ordinary people”.¹⁹¹ The BJP, simultaneously, boasted more than 10 million party members, while making “inroads into civil society by running over 5,000 schools, attracting children from middle class, urban families”, and infiltrating “college campuses, trade unions, urban slums, and the countryside”.¹⁹² Anti-modernism among “secular intellectuals”, Nanda argues, has left “no opposing voices” in the “public sphere that can insist upon respecting the distinction between myth and science.” Instead, “secular intellectuals have led the charge in India for finding salvation in local knowledges,

190 Nanda, 220, 33.

191 Nanda, 55.

192 Nanda, 64.

regardless of their actual validity”.¹⁹³ India’s democratic liberalism suffers: “Hindu holy men and women have entered the political realm [and] openly ask for votes for the Bharatiya Janata Party in the name of the gods.” The “hegemonic” crusade reaches “unemployed and often illiterate untouchable youths, denied all other avenues of dignity and advancement, [who are] courted and induced to join as storm troopers against religious minorities”. Public intellectuals have failed to foster the cultural revolution “needed for India to become truly democratic and secular”.¹⁹⁴

Nanda thus revives the “scientific temper” debate, the conceptual lynchpin of the Nehru period articulated in his *Discovery of India* (1946): “Scientific temper is a way of life — an individual and social process of thinking and acting which uses a scientific method which may include questioning, observing reality, testing, hypothesising, analysing and communicating”.¹⁹⁵ The essence of Nehru’s definition is “critique”, as we identified it earlier in contrast to “deconstruction”, but “critique” not as a monovocal force of “modernity” against “tradition” – rather, it is “critique” as part of a multi-centred dialogic process of ongoing communication grounded in the plural institutions of civil society. This rather resembles the 20th century epistemic paradigm theories of Gaston Bachelard, Michael Polanyi, and, later, Thomas Kuhn. The Nehru experiment, Nanda argues, initiated a grassroots cultural revolution (i.e., ideological power) through institutionalized political and economic power redistribution:

“There is no doubt at all that the right to vote and the demands of the modern economy have largely destroyed the political and economic basis of the social order based upon caste, even though enormous disparities remain.”¹⁹⁶

193 Nanda, 136.

194 Nanda, 63, 201.

195 Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Discovery of India* (Gurgaon: Penguin, 2010), 570-571.

196 Nanda, 201, 266.

Nanda therefore argues that, since independence, India has experienced genuine social progress through the combined powers of mobilised civil society and universal franchise under the secular rule of law. Yet “the actual practice of caste continues”, with “the rape of untouchable women as a means of punishing the ‘uppity’ untouchables, the brutal ‘honour killings’ involving uppercaste women marrying lower caste men”. The absence of secular mass education, Nanda further notes, has undermined possibilities for public action and wellbeing in independent India. The World Economic Forum 2016 identified a three-tiered effect through which education impacts national productivity: (1) it increases the collective workforce ability to conduct tasks more quickly and efficiently; (2) secondary and tertiary education facilitate knowledge transfer concerning new information, products, and technologies from elsewhere; (3) by increasing creativity, education promotes national capacity for new knowledge creation, as well as creation of new products and technologies. It follows that only broad-based secondary education and universal primary education can provide poor countries with the human capital boost required to emancipate large segments of the population from grinding poverty. Nanda writes about education in terms of its significance for ideological power configurations at the national level: “the mobilization of the popular masses, *without a corresponding attention to the cultivation of democratic and secular cultural mores*, is now turning democracy into mob rule” as “political mobilization” is occurring “not as citizens but members of religious communities”.¹⁹⁷

The “social imaginary” is the site of a “hegemonic” struggle over power redistribution among groups: “Out of this unreconstructed social imaginary, Hindutva parties are creating a new cultural identity for Hindus which is aggressively nationalistic and xenophobic”.¹⁹⁸ Nanda defends much maligned scientific objectivity: “the same scientific revolution that replaced the bullock-cart with the train

197 Nanda, 201, 266.

198 Nanda, 63.

to reshape Indian society's understanding of natural laws" also presents "new principles of validating facts", the basis to "judge if traditional facts [caste hierarchies and obligations] about the natural and social world are warranted".¹⁹⁹ The "scientific temper", Nanda writes, realizes "development" through a "social imaginary" privileging causality over "ontology" ("in the name of the gods"). Populations are faced with multiple contradictions in everyday life. An educationally instilled social analysis is required that violent demagoguery not be used to manipulate populations entrenched in poverty and caste.

Post-Development affirmation of "innocence" (sacred ontologies), and denigration of the "scientific temper", Nanda argues, undermines the democratic potential of India's fast-changing society:

"Intellectuals, whose job it is to agitate and educate on behalf of universal and humane values, began to see the protection of traditions from the onslaught of modernity as more important than combating the tyranny of traditions on social relations. Nonmodern worldviews were indiscriminately declared to be 'innocent' because of their victimization by the West ... [Yet] those who appear as 'victims' from a global anti-Enlightenment vantage point are actually the *beneficiaries* of traditional cultural legitimations".²⁰⁰

Nanda writes: "it is not the poor and the culturally marginal classes/castes who are clamouring for indigenous sciences or authentic models of development. Rather, it is the upward mobile urban middle classes, the newly enriched middle-caste agrarian classes who are chief beneficiaries of anti-modernist ideas." These groups seek to "enjoy the benefits of new technology, new consumer goods, and new economic opportunities without losing control over their traditional subordinates, the women, the lower castes, and the poor."²⁰¹ The "social imaginary", behind the mask of "ontology", is

199 Nanda, 194.

200 Nanda, 175.

201 Nanda, 31.

employed to control labour and protect the wealth accumulation of a class. That is, they express distinct features of modern capitalism. By maintaining coercive gender hierarchies, the lynchpin of cultural control is retained securely in place. Women's bodies are used for the ends of traditional elites wedded to powerful new "development" networks.

In this sense, Nanda links the term "development" to multiple possible scenarios of development of capitalist economies, potentially favouring traditional caste elites, or, alternately, the broad masses in terms of greater empowerment. Each of these potentialities represents a distinctive horizon in national life with its own existential meaning and ethical significance. In light of these multiple possible scenarios, Nanda criticizes specific ideological aspects of the 20th century Left. She rejects "inevitability", the dogma that "disenchantment will follow, more or less automatically, in the wake of the development of science and industry". Thus, she affirms the autonomy of a sociological "lifeworld". Yet she rejects the ontological "lifeworld", the Heideggerian Second Structuralist stream in the "holism" at the "heart of caste and gender hierarchy". Both critiques denounce *organicism*, the utopia of uniform interests. In this way, like Chibber, Nanda sees modern India – and other modern societies – in terms of a multi-axial dynamic. Nanda affirms plural autonomous institutions, seeing a historic landmark in the "Dreyfus affair", which "gave birth to the social type we recognize as modern intellectuals". Their role is "the autonomy of artistic, literary, and scientific endeavours from political and social passions and interests".²⁰² Nanda charges "identitarian trends" with targeting "any claim of autonomy or the self-grounding of science". While Nanda cites Vedanta as denying "the autonomy of nature from the divine consciousness", and so the "autonomy of individuals", this argument applies equally to autocratic "inevitability" traditions of the radical Left.²⁰³ There are few scholars who have examined the

202 Nanda, 29.

203 Nanda, 150, 22, 86.

Nehruvian concept of the “scientific temper” with Nanda’s depth and care.

Nanda traces the concept to Dewey’s 1938 “scientific temper” argument in the “Unity of Science as a Social Problem”. It is an everyday “ethos not confined to the laboratory, but in all situations that become problematic” in “human intercourse with nature and with each other”. Intellectuals require “a relative autonomy from the dominant institutions”.²⁰⁴ Dewey’s argument, Nanda underlines, was also a core influence on Ambedkar. India’s modern secular and democratic Left, Nanda highlights, is part of a complex transnational intersection that requires an International Relations methodology to be successfully understood:

“Ambedkar and other Indian modernist, humanist intellectuals (including Nehru and many members of the organized left) who held the advances in science as relevant for a growth of secular culture in India, sought to retrieve those traditions from India’s history which were conducive to a naturalistic (as opposed to enchanted) ontology and critical (as opposed to mystical) thinking”.²⁰⁵

Nanda’s concept of Indian traditions is linked to a transnational dynamic rooted in the unifying powers of modern capitalism. It is a methodology entirely at odds with the Subaltern universal/local dichotomy. “Modernity” and “tradition” are not “ontological” dichotomies:

“Ambedkar’s Deweyan Buddha shows that the development of a modern, secular culture does not demand discarding *all* traditions (which is impossible). What modernism requires is a revitalization of those traditions which can provide a home to the temper of modern science”.²⁰⁶

This argument corresponds to Sen’s “components” theory: “*which* traditions are they looking back to? What elements of Indian

204 Nanda, 187, 3, 82.

205 Nanda, 185.

206 Nanda, 185.

heritage do they seek to reawaken? All cultures contain a multiplicity of traditions.” Traditions are a terrain of ethical action and practical ethics. Like Sen, Nanda’s is a universalism of *comparative experiences*: “we bring values we learn from varied experiences” (i.e., of different societies). Therefore, “values can be rationally assessed” by seeing possibilities elsewhere, despite local “ontological” dogmas defining limits of group possibility (i.e., women, Dalits).²⁰⁷

The “social imaginary” requires a methodology of “institutional capabilities”. Nanda champions a certain type of “development”, describing the role of the developmentalist state.²⁰⁸ Yet she criticises many other authorities on “development”, including Comtean sociology, Hegelian theodicy, and 20th century “modernization theory”. Nanda relinks the *humanist* and early *structuralist* components of socialist democratic tradition, rejecting the “culturalist turn” defined by the Heideggerian confrontation with “modernity”. Although published in 2003, Nanda’s book foresaw many of the nefarious populist political developments that have swamped Western liberal democracies in subsequent years. A great deal can be learned for other countries, good and bad, from observing the post-independence experiences of India, from the Nehru era to the present.

Amartya Sen’s Communicative Principle: Civil Society and Institutional-Capabilities

Sen’s theory of the economy as a moral science can be understood within the wider problematic of civil society. In its most formulaic expression, the Liberal concept of civil society reconciles the theoretical overflow implied by the multi-axial model of capitalism in that the different spheres – economic liberalisation and liberal democracy, or the antinomy of economic and political powers – are made compatible through a flourishing civil society. Sunil

207 Nanda, 17, 188.

208 Nanda, 231, 262.

Khilnani questions whether such neat closure is possible in any realistic understanding of civil society:

“... does ‘civil society’ name a systemic entity, an institutional package, or is it most appropriately used to describe a particular set of human capacities and modes of conduct, always only contingently available (even in places where it does, at present, happen to exist)?”²⁰⁹

This short passage by Khilnani challenges the formulaic Liberal expression of civil society on two fronts: (1) it argues that the “very notion of ‘transition’ has lost much of its coherence: it implies a determinate end-state, yet at no time since the establishment of the professional social sciences has there been a weaker and more indeterminate conception of what exactly populations and their territories are changing to, or can reasonably hope for”.²¹⁰ That is, civil society cannot be plausibly defined as part of a closed and teleological system, as in the perfect competitive system of orthodox economics that ideologically masked the violent excesses of capitalist power.²¹¹ The internal contradictions within capitalism cannot be conjured away by teleological theory, where changes are explained by movement towards an ideal. Khilnani underlines the resulting disjuncture: “a necessary association between civil society and a specific political form – for example, liberal democracy – cannot be assumed”.²¹² A toxic civil society is nurtured in circulatory relation to an ideologically toxic state. Khilnani then comes close to Sen’s theory. He concludes that “civil society is most usefully thought of as identifying a set of human *capacities*, moral and political”. Therefore, “there is little reason to think that we can have a theoretical model which explains retrospectively and guides prospectively the ‘transition’ to a situation where human beings

209 Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani eds. *Civil Society. History and Possibilities* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13.

210 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 13.

211 Roger Backhouse. *The Penguin History of Economics* (London: Penguin, 2002), 198.

212 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 25.

may have such capacities. Understood thus, civil society is not a determinate end-state".²¹³ Khilnani's discussion of civil society provides a sociological frame for better understanding Sen's theory of "capabilities", because in important ways it is similar.

(2) Khilnani's concept of civil society is context and place dependent, emphasising not closed ideational commonality but the diverse concrete practical labours of articulating communities. This raises the question of how different types of authority might come to be established through the processes of civil society. Khilnani problematises "the significance of the category of civil society, both as an analytic tool and as a critical, regulative principle for the politics of the South".²¹⁴ Khilnani historicises the term civil society. On the one hand, it goes back to Locke and the English Civil War, then undergoes a radial permutation through Hegel in the European context. On the other hand, in "the early post-Second World War decades, the concept of civil society received no significant attention in the West. It played no structural role in the arguments during the 1950s of liberal political theorists like Isaiah Berlin [or] Karl Popper [...] who wished to specify the proper sphere and limits of political authority." In fact, Khilnani overlooks Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* (1958) as a germinal discussion of civil society. We will come to this in the next chapter. Meanwhile, Khilnani adds, "During the same period [...] Marxists, both orthodox and dissident, used it negatively: it was identified with 'bourgeois society', a realm of contradiction and mystification sustained by relations of power [and] inextricably linked to the productive base of capitalist society".²¹⁵ That is, the "determinism" of the base-superstructure concept ruled out any place for civil society as a meaningful concept, let alone a reality. Civil society was a euphemism for false consciousness, and its legacy the target of an all-powerful "proletarian" state after the revolution.

213 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 25.

214 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 14.

215 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 15.

Khilnani explains that “a serious revival of the term [civil society] began on the Left in the late 1960s, gaining popularity among radicals disaffected with Marxism [as] the existing structures of Left politics (dominated by Communist Parties) were rejected in favour of ‘social movements’”. Clearly, this shift expressed disillusionment with the Leninist theory of the vanguardist one-party that had dominated the Third International (1919-1933). Theoretically, these changes reflected “the recovery of Gramsci’s modification of the arrangements of Marx’s schema of base and superstructure [in favour of] civil society [as] the site of decisive struggle for hegemony”.²¹⁶ Indeed, the Soviet Union fell in no small part on the issue of civil society: “The term finally went into orbit during the late 1970s and 1980s, after its adoption by groups and intellectuals agitating against the authoritarian states and regimes in Eastern Europe (especially Poland)”.²¹⁷

In the post-colonial context of the South, Khilnani identifies the crisis of civil society in a set of citizenship prerequisites: a minimal public truth consensus, a self that is open to discursive persuasion, both capable of overcoming the absolute and indivisible solidarities of traditional communities. We might call these citizenship prerequisites a “national culture”, in the sense that Fanon used the term in *the Wretched of the Earth*.²¹⁸ Khilnani explains how such a “national culture” depends upon “abstract trust systems like the market, money, large organizations, and bureaucracy”, which themselves can create toxic relations between individuals rather than promoting “civic sense”.²¹⁹ He gives the Indian experience as an example:

“Prior to the emergence of a unitary state, and the requirement that this be constituted by particular types of individual, by ‘citizens’, society here was constituted by groups (defined by complex permutations

216 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 16.

217 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 16.

218 Fanon, 195-225.

219 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 28-29.

of religious belief, caste position, and so on). These were situated in positions of adjacency to one another, pursuing different goals by different logics. This was a distinctive, non-liberal form of pluralism. But the intensifying struggle for goods and resources which are dispensed by the state and are linked to citizenship (such as secure state employment, education, and so on), within a nation which has very differentiated social groupings and great economic disparities, can destroy civility, as it disaggregates existing groups and reconstitutes them as political agents".²²⁰

On one level, Khilnani cites the centrality of "political accountability", and how this might be secured through "constitutions, competitive political parties, and markets and property rights", while underlining how these elements do not "constitute a coherent and stable mix for securing autonomy and prosperity".²²¹ At a deeper level, Khilnani identifies the underlying organising structure for these experiences in a telescoped experience of historical time in India and other countries whose populations have endured colonisation by European powers before reaching the stage of national independence:

"New states have had enormous demands placed on them simultaneously: to ensure their own security, to legitimate themselves through the practices of modern democratic politics, and to tend to the welfare of their citizens. In older states, such demands have been lodged sequentially, not simultaneously. On occasion, new states have been altogether extinguished by the weight of these demands or, more usually, they have succumbed to despotic ambitions. [...] In the South, it is certain capacities of the state which simultaneously require both development and moderation: they require development precisely in ways which are self-moderating, self-limiting".²²²

Khilnani makes a striking observation. Security suggests the priority of military power in the vulnerable geopolitical context of post-independence, while legitimation suggests ideological power

220 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 29.

221 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 15.

222 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 31.

involved in building hegemony at the national level. Both are complicated by a unique conjuncture of economic and political sources of social power. In Western countries, economic development occurred prior to political democracy, with intervals of as much as a century. The significance of this can hardly be overstated. Developing states preoccupied with the drive to amass capital were not required to employ political moderation with regard to their populations, as we see in E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). How can a state negotiate the antinomy between economic development and political democracy? What are the implications for the ideological and military sources of power, which will necessarily be shaped by this specific entwining of the political and economic sources of social power? Khilnani therefore uncovers a crucial feature of civil society in post-colonial countries in the focus on "social movements' which exist outside 'high politics' and the party system as the crucial agent for the creation of a civil society and 'democratization'".²²³ The methodological priority of social movements is an expression of the specific scenario of development for the new post-colonial nation-states of the South, understood as the behaviour-shaping institutions and relationships that define a distinctive history of modern civil society.

To clarify what this conjuncture might be we should return to three of Nanda's points from the previous section, which now appear under a new light: (1) Nanda places emphasis upon the role of public intellectuals in their various elective affinities to modes of state power, where ideological power is inflated through the weakness of political power: as Khilnani says, "many states in the South are 'quasi-states' [...] it is precisely the absence of an effective state that leaves human beings in what are approximations to the state of nature".²²⁴ Public intellectuals are integral to civil society. (2) Nanda's criticism of "determinism" in radical Left ideology is clearly taking issue on the most basic level with the base-superstructure

223 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 31.

224 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 31.

determinism that Gramsci substituted with “civil society”. This is why Nanda regularly refers to the centrality of social movements, as a force for good and ill, in her arguments. She is tacitly indebted to the Gramscian theory of civil society. This is very similar also to how Sen discusses civil society in his theory of “capabilities”. Furthermore, Nanda’s rejection of base-superstructure determinism implies that she tacitly adopts a multi-axial view of capitalism, as we see from the similarity of her discussions on power to the theories of Mann on the sources of social power. (2) Despite being critical of the base-superstructure determinism, Nanda identifies herself with the Left as a mutually reinforcing commitment to scientific method, human freedom and the equality principle. What Left tradition is this, and what, if not a dogmatic dialectical determinism, provides its ethical resources? Upon the basis of her own writings, we might reasonably identify Nanda with the description of the Left in Peter Singer’s writings. Singer firstly underlines a crisis for the traditional Left:

“The Left needs a new paradigm. The collapse of communism and the abandonment by democratic socialist parties of the traditional socialist aim of public ownership have deprived the Left of the goals it cherished over the two centuries in which it grew to a position of great political power and intellectual influence.”²²⁵

Singer then pinpoints a conceptual zone where reform is required to update Left thought and transcend the anti-scientific weaknesses which have impeded its practical success: “It is time for the left to take seriously the fact that we have evolved from other animals”.²²⁶ He elaborates: “Marxists have generally been enthusiastic about Darwin’s account of the origin of the species, as long as its implications are confined to anatomy and physiology. Marx’s materialist theory of history implies that there is no fixed human nature. It changes with each new mode of production.

225 Peter Singer. *Writings on an Ethical Life* (New York: Ecco, 2000), 273.

226 Singer, 273.

[...] Belief in the malleability of human nature has been important for the left because it has provided grounds for hoping that a different kind of society is possible. The real reason that the left rejected Darwinism is that it dashed the left's great dream: the perfectibility of man".²²⁷ Singer concludes: "For as long as the left has existed, it has sought a society in which all human beings live harmoniously and cooperatively with each other in peace and freedom. For Darwin, on the other hand, the struggle for existence, or at least the existence of one's offspring, is unending. In the twentieth century, the dream of the perfectibility of humankind turned into the nightmares of Stalinist Russia, China during the Cultural Revolution, and Cambodia under Pol Pot".²²⁸ For Singer, being of the Left means a full ethical and practical commitment to the values contained in the equality principle:

"... being on the side of the weak, not the powerful, of the oppressed, not the oppressor [...] a desire to do something to reduce the huge quantity of pain and suffering that exists in our universe. [...] If we shrug our shoulders at the avoidable suffering of the weak and the poor, of those who are getting exploited and ripped off, we are not of the left. The left wants to change this situation."²²⁹

We immediately note how Singer's argument differs fundamentally from other 20th century attempts to provide new foundations for Left thought, such as Althusser's argument linking physics, mathematics and Marxism as the three objective branches of modern scientific thought. Althusser cited the modern physics of Galileo, Greek mathematics, and, thirdly, Marx's founding of the science of Historical Materialism out of Classical Political Economy. Each is marked by what Althusser terms an "epistemological break," or a period when ideological concepts are replaced by scientific ones. Althusser tries to make Marxism a hard science. It requires no

227 Singer, 275.

228 Singer, 275-276.

229 Singer, 274.

ethical perspective. Marxism is simply true because it is scientifically accurate, and therefore its adherents can remain optimistic that a classless society will follow the revolution as a matter of fact. It is entirely impersonal. That is, Althusser tried to construct a viable intellectual foundation for believing “scientifically” in the perfectibility tacit in one part of Marx’s thought. As Mann has written:

“Marx thought modern classes were involved in a head-on dialectical struggle with one another. [...] He was partly correct. Such class organizations did emerge, capable of changing history. True, his view of the working class was absurdly utopian – how unlikely that an exploited class would confound all of previous history and rise up to destroy all stratification. Nonetheless, Marx had discovered an essential truth: Capitalism had created potentially extensive, political and (occasionally) symmetrical and dialectical classes. Rare in earlier societies, such classes have been ubiquitous ever since”.²³⁰

The “absurd utopianism” that Mann sees in Marx is the “determinism” criticised by Nanda, linked to the base-superstructure exclusion of civil society, and the entire ensemble can be explained by the scientific weakness that Singer has identified in a quasi-religious “dream of perfectibility”. This critique of aspects of radical Left thought tacitly characterises Sen’s “capabilities” theory. Sen’s theory is grounded in an ethical commitment. In a French language collection of Sen’s writings, *L’économie est une science morale*, Sen reveals in the opening section, “Abstract ideas and Concrete horrors”, that the source of his work is similar to Emmanuel Levinas’ theory of direct encounter with the “other” as being of “ultimate moral significance”.²³¹ The sight of masses of starving people during the 1943 Bengal famine, witnessed during Sen’s childhood, influenced

²³⁰ Mann, *Vol. 2*, 27.

²³¹ Emmanuel Levinas. *Liberté et commandement* (Paris : Fata Morgana, 1994), 21.

his commitment to values that Singer has identified with the Left.²³² Sen has made important steps towards revolutionising the concept of civil society in light of Fanon’s problematic of “national culture” – itself a profound reflection upon civil society dynamics in the South, despite him not employing that term in his 1961 text.

To understand Sen’s theory of “capabilities” as a contribution to discussions of civil society, a revealing point of entry is his concept of “institutional fundamentalism”. Sen writes:

“Any theory of justice has to give an important place to the role of institutions, so that the choice of institutions cannot but be a central element in any plausible account of justice. However, we have to seek institutions that promote justice, rather than treating the institutions as themselves manifestations of justice, which would reflect a kind of institutional fundamentalism.”²³³

Sen further explains: “none of the grand institutional formulae typically deliver what their visionary advocates hope [...] their actual success in good social realizations is thoroughly contingent on varying social, economic, political and cultural circumstances. Institutional fundamentalism may not only ride roughshod over the complexity of societies, but quite often the self-satisfaction that goes with alleged institutional wisdom even prevents critical examination of the actual consequences of having the recommended institutions”.²³⁴ The concept of “institutional fundamentalism”, in fact, with its counterpart in “the complexity of societies”, with their varying “contingent circumstances”, points in an unspoken way to the problematic of civil society that we have so far discussed in this section. There is a uniqueness to every social experience of modernisation, even, as Khilnani writes, as “every local and domestic space, every nation-state, is today rocked by causalities which escape its bounds and which condition the possibility of

232 Amartya Sen. *L'économie est une science morale* (Paris : Découverte, 2003), 44-46.

233 Amartya Sen. *The Idea of Justice* (London: Penguin, 2009), 82-83.

234 Sen, *Justice*, 83.

its continuing viability as a habitat for civil human relations".²³⁵ Therefore, we have already moved beyond the universal/local dichotomy characterising Heideggerian critiques to what John Gledhill describes sociologically as a world of "veiled linkages" between "centre and periphery, between drug economy and the international capitalist economy, between Third World debt, metropolitan banks and financial institutions, between Third World dictators like Saddam Hussein and the military industrial complex".²³⁶ That is to say, we are in a dialectical space of the social sciences as Marx envisioned it.

Sen investigates antinomies in ceaseless contradictory situations in modern everydayness, citing "plural, and sometimes conflicting, general concerns that bear on the understanding of justice".²³⁷ There are related *antinomies of development*, where different "types of commitments may be combinable, but may also be in conflict with each other". There is no "royal road to evaluation of economic or social policies".²³⁸ Sen's dialectical analysis differs from Hegel's "royal road to Science", which, transcending "common sense", ultimately reaches "fully developed, perfected cognition".²³⁹ Sen explicitly denies perfection, in the Second Enlightenment tradition pioneered in Bachelard's 1934 post-relativity argument that "dialectical reasoning must remain open".²⁴⁰ Sen sees capitalism as a multi-axial dynamic, generating sometimes conflicting freedoms. He emphasises a "broad approach" which "permits simultaneous appreciation of the vital roles, in the process of development,

235 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 32.

236 John Gledhill. *Power and its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics* (London: Pluto, 1994), 11.

237 Sen, *Justice*, 57.

238 Amartya Sen. *Development as Freedom* (New Delhi: Oxford, 2007), 120, 85.

239 Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 43.

240 Gaston Bachelard. *Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique* (Paris: Quadrige, 2009), 24.

of many different institutions, including markets and market-related organizations, government and local authorities, political parties and other civic institutions, educational arrangements and opportunities of open dialogue and debate (including the role of the media and other means of communication)".²⁴¹ That is, what we conventionally call civil society, yet, strikingly, following Khilnani's specification for the South: "civil society, far from designating a world of spontaneous arrangements, is in fact constitutively intermeshed with the state".²⁴² In this context, Khilnani writes, "modern political parties, although they have shown generally little success in being able to maintain themselves as durable structures of trust, are a crucial point of articulation between civil society and the state". Political parties, he writes, are a reference to "the abilities of social movements to secure both secure stable and durable institutional form and to embody self-limiting properties".²⁴³

In terms of economic power, Sen's view of capitalism is ambiguous. He writes: "the praise of capitalism by Karl Marx and his characterization in *Das Kapital* of the American Civil War as 'the one great event of contemporary history' related directly to the importance of the freedom of labor contract as opposed to slavery and the enforced exclusion from the labor market. [...] the crucial challenges of development in many developing countries today include the need for the freeing of labor from explicit or implicit bondage that denies access to the open labor market". That is, Sen views capitalism in a double trajectory, arguing the need to:

"... judge the market mechanism comprehensively in terms of all its roles and effects, including those in generating economic growth and, under many circumstances, even economic equity. We must also examine, on the other side, the persistence of deprivation among segments of the community that happen to remain excluded from the benefits of the

241 Sen, DE, 9.

242 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 31.

243 Kaviraj/Khilnani, 31-32.

market-oriented society [as well as considering] criticisms of lifestyles and values associated with the culture of markets”.²⁴⁴

Modern societies live in the transnational throes of “development” and cannot simply exit “development” except in fantasy. “Development” is conjunctural, contingent upon the prior structure of the logic of capitalism, but not “inevitable” as in a uniform self-replicating process expanding around the globe. Sen asks what “development” is for, while privileging enhanced individual “capabilities”, “functionings” and “freedoms”. Not only food and shelter, but also self-respect within the community, are universal and fundamental human experiences. Connecting Sen’s question to a wider political sociology of capitalism, we find: (1) Sen’s comparative, not perfectionist, optic; (2) seeing individual “capabilities” in circulatory and mutually reinforcing relation with institutional “capabilities”; (3) seeing the “lifeworld” as pluralistic networks, with reason arbitrating ethical belief. Sen defines “positional objectivity”. A citizenry unable to distinguish science from pseudo-science is imprisoned by ignorance weaponizable by power elites; (4) “Universalism” is grounded in ethical consequentialism, an expanding circle of moral consideration, and the human possibility of comparison.

The theory of “capabilities” is a social scientific representation concerned with understanding the place of human freedom and ethics within an objective understanding of capitalism. Sen’s concept of freedom is not at all metaphysical. It is sociologically and historically specific. It is based on the thesis that poverty is a prison, because it cuts off all life possibilities but a narrow few, constituting a type of life sentence where the poor are in a vulnerable power relation to those holding wealth and power. The poverty Sen describes is not eternal. It is the poverty produced by capitalism: forced uprooting, dependence upon the wage contract, and exclusion from a system which produces a wealth of choices

244 Sen, *DF*, 7.

and possibilities, but only for a small minority who lived in a separate world and accumulate wealth off the labour of the poor. We have already seen that Sen sees capitalism as a moral advance over many pre-capitalist systems which were built upon forced labour. The meaning of Sen's concept of freedom is already contained in the title of his book, *Development as Freedom*. Development and freedom are in dialectical relation. One cannot exist without the other. However, development can either give or take away freedom, affirm it or negate it. Sen is critiquing the dominant paradigm of development, in which development takes away freedom in the form of poverty for the vast majority. The title of the book is an ethical stance, arguing that the very purpose of development should be social and political freedom, or the guarantee of political and social rights for the entire population. This fundamentally means ending the systemic poverty as it is now engrained within the functioning of the capitalist system as it exists, that is, creating a society beyond capitalism which does not thereby destroy the modern advantages of the market.

Sen's "capabilities" combine commitment to social and political freedom for entire populations. In light of this, we can differentiate: (1) civil society: autonomous institutions either outside or at the frontier of state legal jurisdiction under conditions of state centralisation, industrialisation and secularisation; (2) lifeworld: the phenomenological conception transferred to sociology via Weber's linkage of power to meanings and values. They are two aspects of articulatory practice, or social practice that is emulated by others, a source of authority, doable and recognizable to others, and that fulfils specific needs. Sen broaches the lifeworld because he talks a great deal about the importance of valuation in people's everyday lives. But Sen does not want to protect the innocence of the lifeworld. It is a site of education and transformation. One example might be what Mridula Mukherjee has identified as a failing of India's radical Left in the freedom struggle, in sometimes overlooking the importance of transforming peasant consciousness (i.e., "lifeworld"), because

of a Left ideological faith in the “inevitability” of a dialectically predestined historical outcome (i.e., framed as “objectivity”).²⁴⁵ If the advent of classless society is objectively “inevitable”, transforming “lifeworld” consciousness is superfluous. Mukherjee’s historical episode illustrates Sen’s “capabilities”. His “objectivity” is a prolonged and multcentred dialogic process that strongly resembles the prolonged discussions of mass education by an anti-colonial national movement in Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*.²⁴⁶ How can institutions function if populations don’t identify with the values and worldviews underpinning them? Fanon predicted dictatorship in post-independence in the absence of a mass political education through organised struggle, and he called this process “national culture”.²⁴⁷ How to foster modern egalitarian ideologies where populations have internalized hierarchic caste cosmologies? State-imposed dogma is no solution. This core of the “scientific temper” question appears in Sen’s *communicative principle*.

Sen focuses on the 1929 onset of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (1889-1951) “later period” to articulate a theory of “objectivity” that crystalizes many 20th century Second Enlightenment gains.²⁴⁸ Wittgenstein’s vision was deeply pluralistic:

“... how many kinds of sentence are there? ... There are *countless* kinds ... this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, and others become obsolete and get forgotten ... the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form.”²⁴⁹

The “life-form” theory (i.e., “lifeworld”) professes that *consciousness is meaningless without communication*, as in

245 Mridula Mukherjee. *Peasants in India’s Non-Violent Revolution*. Practice and Theory (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), 507-510.

246 Fanon, 173.

247 Fanon, 174.

248 Sen, *Justice*, 31-32.

249 Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations* (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 10.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1929). It is a Marxist insight. Sen cites Gramsci's influence on Wittgenstein's "later period" in the "dialogic principle". Four elements differentiate Sen's and Subaltern "hegemony" concepts: (1) Both reject 19th century *ontological individualism* (i.e., only the individual is real), viewing human reality *socially*; (2) However, Sen's embrace of *ethical individualism* (i.e., to protect disempowered people within communities, manifested in rights discourse) contrasts with Heideggerian "community" as sovereign authority principle grounded in "being's" priority over critical consciousness; (3) Sen affirms the "social imaginary", as internally pluralistic and externally mediated conventions, modifiable by public action (i.e. citizenship). For Sen, agency and rationality are linked in the socially embedded individual, that is, the civil society activist.

Hence, the centrality given to the quality of information in Sen's "capabilities" theory. Sen cites Gramsci's argument (any "acquired worldview belongs to a particular group"), not as an *organicist* but a *dialogic* principle in which "reasoning might concern evidence, in occasional overlap of description and evaluation, but it does not concern metaphysics". It must "be the ultimate arbitrator of ethical beliefs", in the "need for objective reasoning about issues of justice and injustice".²⁵⁰ Rationality has "reappeared sporadically throughout history in diverse civilizational contexts, in response to problematic situations". Individuals thereby break beyond the "attachment to one's own sect".²⁵¹

Openness, Sen argues, has its bodily corollary in listening: "all of us are capable of being reasonable through being open-minded about welcoming information and through reflecting upon arguments coming from different quarters."²⁵² Populations learn to "avoid local parochialism", through "invoking a wide variety of viewpoints based on diverse experiences". Reason thereby

250 Sen, *Justice*, 119, 39-41. /Gramsci, 324.

251 Sen, *Justice*, 75.

252 Sen, *Justice*, 43.

undermines *ontological* claims about fixity asserted by established power, transcending the “cultural and social milieu”, with its “experiences, prejudices and convictions”, linked to “vested interest, entrenched tradition, and custom”. “Hegemony”, by this account, is “dialogue and communication”, “[allowing] incompleteness of judgments”, and “the absence of once-and-for-all-finality”.²⁵³ As we will see in Section II, this is quite close to the ideal of “listening” articulated by Tagore in response to the 1905 Swadeshi experience, that shaped the Ethic of Reconciliation in India’s freedom struggle.

Simultaneously, Sen is close to the 1935 Autonomy of Science principle, that opens Chapter Two. *Comparative*, not *perfectionist*, public reason requires the “multiplicity of institutions” against “unchecked power”, or “institutional balance” in “countervailing power”. He is similarly concerned with the second circle of violence and progress. The “complete absence of countervailing powers in the Soviet institutional structure” plagued the Soviet experiment. The understanding of limit, relation, comparison, and interdependence demands “institutions that *promote* justice”, rather than the *ontological* politics of “treating the institutions as themselves manifestations of justice”.²⁵⁴ This entails a consequentialist ethics, focused on everyday lifeworlds as “contingent on varying social, economic, political and cultural circumstances” given the “complexity of societies”. The “lifeworld” is sociological. Sen’s “lifeworld” is alternate horizons in everyday time, “the lives that people manage – or do not manage – to live”. They are premised on “freedoms that we actually have to choose between different kinds of lives”, such that “the freedom itself may be seen as important”.²⁵⁵

Being well housed, well nourished, and being respected, or doing work one finds fulfilling, while freely participating in public life, are “functionings” that are existentially heterogeneous, concrete, quantitative and observable. “Capabilities”, as “functionings” sets,

253 Sen, *Justice*, 45, 88-89.

254 Sen, *Justice*, 82.

255 Sen, *Justice*, 18.

are permanently incomplete based on intrinsic *antinomies*. Markets and democracies, for instance, have intrinsic tensions, as *systems with conflicting organizational principles*. For democracy, the masses are citizens (universal franchise weighs them in legal parity with the elite). Markets deal with commodities rather than citizens, as consumers of goods, suppliers of labour, etc. The valuing of labourers in supply and demand terms negates the equality principle underpinning “citizenship”. These antinomies, implied by Sen, are *without exit*. Sen’s reflections concern the conditions implied by the multi-axial model of capitalism.²⁵⁶

Sen only fleetingly discusses “institutional capabilities”: “The case for not going that way [“institutional capabilities”] lies in the type of reasoning involved”. Four conceptions in Sen’s writings explain why this “type of reasoning” is troubling. (1) *Participation*: Public action is Sen’s core principle, as it has been in post-independence India (Section III). “In valuing a person’s ability to take part in the life of the society, there is an implicit valuation of the life of the society itself”.²⁵⁷ These “valuations” constitute a collective “social imaginary”: “military strength for Americans”, or “game playing abilities for the Chinese”. “Institutional capabilities” are existential valuations of collective power, defining group prestige and self-affirmation.²⁵⁸ These interacting and interdependent evaluations of individuals correspond to collective power. It can radically differ across the border, i.e., infrastructural resources dividing the U.S.A. from Mexico. Sen’s methodological individualism downplays the intrinsic conflict, as his U.S. military power example starkly suggests. The leaked secret U.S. assessment of 66,000 Iraqi and Afghan civilian deaths shows that the “institutional capabilities” valued by Americans are experienced as remorseless mass murder

256 Sen, *DF*, 75, 120, 74.

257 Sen, *Justice*, 262, 246.

258 Sen, *DF*, 21.

by countless others.²⁵⁹ Sen does not really confront the toxic aspect of “capabilities” as a psychological self-image. He nevertheless emphasises democratization of identity through “objective reasoning”, a “hegemonic” relinking of humanist and structuralist aspects of the socialist tradition.²⁶⁰ Sen’s failure to pursue this issue likely results from an inadequately deep confrontation with the unifying referential principle of capital as defining power relations upon a transnational scale.

(2) *Identity*: “Multiple membership” in “social complexity” *conjuncturally* entails multiple choices. Sen writes: “The increasing tendency to see people in terms of one dominant identity (‘this is your duty as an American’, ‘you must commit these acts as a Muslim’) is an imposition of an external and arbitrary priority, and a denial of liberty to decide one’s own belonging”.²⁶¹ Organicist mobilization shattered Sen’s childhood during the Partition, with the murder of the Muslim labourer Kadar Mia.²⁶² Individuals *objectively* belong to intersecting but conflicting *network* groups: gender, class, language, profession, nationality, and religion. Identity is grounded in multi-axial institutional spheres. They are politically manipulated by *organicist* mobilization to believe they belong to one insular and “special” group, “pure” and superior to all others.

Sen’s “components” theory describes “identity” as a *choice* among multiple and conflicting transmitted components (social imaginary), not a unitary *discovery* (ontology).²⁶³ “Choice” confirms Sen’s humanism, in the humanist-structuralist compound traceable to Durkheim during the Dreyfus Affair. Sen invokes a *circle of*

259 Robert Fisk. “The final punishment of Julian Assange reminds journalists their job is to uncover what the state keeps secret”. Independent, May 31, 2019.

260 Sen, *Justice*, 57, 41.

261 Sen, *Justice*, 247.

262 Sen, *DF*, 8.

263 Amartya Sen. *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (London: Penguin, 2006), 290.

moral consideration, seeking to overcome thinking “identities in terms of groups that include some and firmly exclude others”, i.e. inside/out dichotomy. Sen promotes cosmopolitanism: “The normative demands of being guided by ‘humanity’ or ‘humaneness’ can build on our membership in the wide category of human beings, irrespective of our particular nationalities, or sects, or tribal affiliations (traditional or modern).” Sen contrasts this with the “privileging of an alleged ‘cultural’ or ‘racial’ identity over other identities and over non-identity based concerns.”²⁶⁴ Human being is a scientific category defining a natural species.

(3) *Irrationality*: Supposing toxic myths sustaining “institutional capabilities” (i.e., “the various things a person may value being and doing collectively”) prevent *others* living as *they* have reason to value? The rights of American slaveowners and upper caste Indians to suppress their “natural” subordinates, as Divine Fate intended? Respecting others as equals is *socially* learned, not natural. A scientific education must demystify cultural hierarchies as “social imaginaries” rather than “ontological” realities. In Sen’s “capabilities”, “living the life one has reason to value”, i.e., “*one*” implies *others* are deserving of equal respect *within a common circle of moral consideration*.²⁶⁵

(4) *Reason*: Reason is an everyday affair. Sen examines solidarity patterns (“institutional capabilities”), while urging their rationalization on consequentialist lines: “reason persuades people to reflect on intelligent action and consequences”.²⁶⁶ Sen’s “capabilities” examples - “political freedoms”, “economic facilities”, “social opportunities”, “transparency guarantees”, and “protective security” promoting the “general capability of a person” – presuppose the egalitarian 1789 Enlightenment legacy of the rule of law. “Public policy” should “foster human capabilities” through promoting “distinct but interrelated instrumental freedoms”.²⁶⁷

264 Sen, *DF*, 227-249, 142-143

265 Sen, *DF*, 18.

266 Sen, *Justice*, 75-77.

267 Sen, *DF*, 10.

Freedoms are plural, sometimes complementary, but also sometimes conflicting. To negotiate these *antinomies* of development, “public reasoning and debates are central to the pursuit of justice” where “demands of ethical objectivity relate closely to the ability to stand up to open public reasoning”. The *communicative principle* involves listening or “open impartiality [invoking] judgments, among others, from outside the focal group, to avoid parochial bias”.²⁶⁸ The very otherness of differing perspectives and experiences has the everyday power to revolutionize a person’s way of seeing. Sen writes:

“A different viewpoint poses a question ... In a local world of fixed beliefs and specific practices, parochialism may be an unrecognized and unquestioned result ... Plato and Aristotle supported the established practice of infanticide, being unfamiliar with societies that functioned well without the alleged necessity. Considering the views of others and the reasoning behind them can be an effective way of determining what objectivity demands.”²⁶⁹

Sen deepens Polanyi’s 1935 Autonomy of Science principle: “‘independence of mind’ is difficult to achieve without the trauma of encountering an alien reality”, for “it is hard for people to transcend their positionally limited visions”. Information provides the basis for “objectivity”: “Positional illusions can be overcome through broadening the informational basis of evaluations”. Sen promotes the Gramscian educational principle where “every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship”, occurring “between the various forces of which the nation is composed”, and “the international and worldwide fields”. It represents a “unity of science and life” in “in which alone liberty of thought can be realized”.²⁷⁰ Empirically “confirmed” local illusions break against proofs of existence from elsewhere: “An objective illusion [believing women inferior as *being*, when they are *socially* forced into inferiority] is a positionally objective belief that is mistaken

268 Sen, *Justice*, 123.

269 Sen, *Justice*, 131.

270 Gramsci, 350.

in terms of transpositional scrutiny". There are "contextually more compelling criteria beyond positional perspectives" [seeing women from freer societies proves inferiority is a local convention, not ontology].²⁷¹ The "social imaginary" is thus revolutionized through transnational circuits in experience and information, altering circles of moral consideration.

Sen's core argument is the "intrinsic relevance" of "choice" in human life.²⁷² It is the power to revolutionize one's life possibilities for oneself and others in a society of conflicting freedoms. Sen deepens the First Structuralist revolution of the early 20th century. By emphasising "comparison" over "absolute", Sen reproduces Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1938) or Durkheim's relational constitution of social realities, with "no compulsion to eliminate every reasoned alternative except exactly one". Instead, "we search for comparatives, and not for the utopian objective of transcendence", for "comparative broadening is part of the persistent interest in innovative epistemological, ethical and political work". Sen thereby distinguishes "transcendental institutionalism", concentrated on "perfect justice", to "relative comparisons of justice and injustice" in "actual societies" that "already existed or could feasibly emerge".²⁷³ This social *universalism* differs from metaphysical varieties.

Successful institutions require a participatory and inclusive relation to multiple lifeworlds, affirming the citizenship principle. Sen writes:

The interdependent roles of institutions and behavioural patterns in achieving justice in society are of relevance not only in assessing ideas of governance from the remote past, but also in their application to contemporary economies and political philosophy.²⁷⁴

The circulatory institution-lifeworld relation examines "how

271 Sen, *Justice*, 162-69.

272 Sen, *DF*, 13-14.

273 Sen, *Justice*, xviii, 170, 5-7.

274 Sen, *Justice*, 75.

the different potential institutional arrangements would mesh with, and interact with, behavioural norms standard in society.”³⁴² This raises “hegemonic” questions: can egalitarian democracy survive without prior social revolution? Is nationhood a prerequisite for modern mass democracy, relying upon shared feelings, trust, expectation and belief?

Sen invokes an expanding *circle of moral consideration*: “the inadequacy of a defence of liberty” is “when it separates out some people whose liberty and independence should be cherished and protected”. It is “unsustainable to have a defence of the freedom of human beings that separates some people whose liberties matter from others not included in that favoured category”. The inside/outside dichotomy is arbitrary, its ontological claims unjustified. It follows that “justice, by its very nature, has to have a universal reach”. This again corresponds to Nehru period experiences and dilemmas. Justice is not the *whole* externally encompassing the particular. Beginning from the premise of *small things*, every possible situation encountered will raise the same universal justice question – concerning how anyone might respect the other. The question concerns the “equal consideration of interests” principle, which rejects “selective inclusion on an arbitrary basis” (i.e., caste, Apartheid, etc).²⁷⁵ Sen articulates an Ethic of Reconciliation characteristic of the freedom struggle and the Nehru period (Section III).

Egypt: Ontological and Sociological Methodologies

Fundamentally similar methodological arguments to the “ontology” of Escobar and Chatterjee have been used to investigate Egypt. Similarly, there are “sociological” arguments closer to Sen or Nanda. A colonial order/chaos construct legitimized Empire in its own discourses. Dynamic pre-1857 Mughal commerce

²⁷⁵ Sen, *Justice*, 116-117.

and state-building was declared “anarchy” and stifled.²⁷⁶ This event can be viewed from either of the two methodological alternatives. The epithet “anarchy” reflected either an ontological current endemic to scientific Western “modernity” (the cultural imperative of Heideggerian “representation”), or the arbitrary abuses of ideological power (the sociological optic), expressing changing political relations of economic class domination. Talal Asad examines Egypt using an “ontological” methodology, the “march from premodern chaos to modern order” as “initiated by Europeans and overseen at first by them and later by Europeanized Egyptians”.²⁷⁷ Leila Ahmed, meanwhile, maps pre-colonial extractive institutions, modified and intensified by Empire. Egyptian society had long been the prey of extractive institutions, based on centralised states and surplus extraction, albeit of the tributary type that preceded capitalism in civilisational land empires everywhere. European technological revolution, Ahmed writes, provided conditions for the new colonial conquest of capitalist sea-based empire:

“Egypt, which had traded chiefly with the Ottoman empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was trading predominantly with Europe by mid-century. This imbalance was occurring for reasons external and internal to the Middle East. During the first half of the eighteenth-century Europe underwent a technological revolution that culminated in the industrial revolution, ..., outstripping in efficiency and economy the techniques of the Middle East. At the time, production in the Middle East was disrupted by a devastating series of plagues and unrest. In Egypt almost continuous warfare within the Mamluk ruling class, plus extortionist taxation, further contributed to decline in production.”²⁷⁸

276 Burton Stein and David Arnold. *A History of India* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 196.

277 Talal Asad. *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 211.

278 Leila Ahmed. *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 131.

Ahmad cites different modes of surplus extraction to explain the comparative power of states, while seeing the capitalist regime sired by the industrial revolution as dominant over older extractive modes due to its unparalleled self-organising principle which simultaneously mobilises military, economic, ideological and political power in novel ways. An internal/external circulatory dynamic therefore explains Egyptian vulnerability to colonial penetration. But it is not uniquely cultural in any one-dimensional sense. Ahmed focuses sociologically on Egyptian “lifeworlds” which are entwined diversely in all four sources of social power – changing each other’s inner shapes and outward trajectories. In Ahmed’s methodological usage, secularization embodies the multiplying institutional pressures of these interacting sources of social power, as in Dewey’s 1934 vision of a multi-axial “shift” in the “social center of gravity”:

“... the enormous expansion of associations formed for educational, political, economic, philanthropic and scientific purposes, which has occurred independently of any religion”.²⁷⁹

The growth of educational and administrative institutions was a self-protective bid by the state intended to forestall colonial penetration and domination. In post-independence, Ahmed cites Egyptian women’s “participation in the economy and in political life” as “complicating, altering, and informing the discourse on women”, following revolutionized post-1952 rural land relations and urban class structure.²⁸⁰ The Nasserite policy of egalitarianism redefined public life, through multiplying non-religious administrative, educational and service networks. Ahmed’s “development” analysis centres sociological “lifeworlds”, the inside/outside “social imaginary” revolutionized by the multi-axial institutional pressures of transnational capitalist penetration.

279 John Dewey. *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 59-61.

280 Ahmed, 131.

Methodologically, this process which progressively destroyed older surplus extraction modes while forcing the creation of new and experimental ones, as displaced elites struggled to adapt and survive, or new elites surfaced, can fairly be defined as a dialectical remaking of the logic of capitalism through local resources. Given this, it would be an error to equate capitalism with a fixed package of precepts, values, and practices, a “pure” and premade universal project that externally encounters local communities. Capitalism is by nature incomplete. Its universality is a *concrete universality*, implying the concrete labor and practical diversity of articulating different social hierarchies in contingent relationships to the sources of social power, and which therefore should not be treated merely as derivatives of socioeconomic class, and where culture is not extrinsic to capitalism. Through this sociological optic, community is porous and constructed upon its entanglements with diverse networks, itineraries, and social formations, whose logic may produce the expansion, contraction, or dissolution of a given organization of power.

By contrast, Asad invokes Heideggerian “lifeworld” purism: “secularism did not exist in Egypt prior to modernity”. The purity of inside/out relations implies a process of cultural corruption, in a sequential order denoting a fall. Asking “what made its existence possible?”, Asad invokes ontological contamination: “the state is not a cause but an articulation of secularization”, that is, the state is primarily a source of semiotic signification. However, Asad does not use semiotics as in the post-Peirce methodology where diverse semiotic processes are overlapping, porous and relational rather than pure or monolithic. For Peirce, everything is relational and in permanent flux. Scientific method is the introduction of provisional intelligibility in relation to what Dewey in 1929 called the “region of Being in which change rules” and which “is infected with *non-being*”.²⁸¹ Rather, Asad uses signs following the Heideggerian

281 John Dewey. *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 366.

1927 methodology where “signs indicate worldliness”, that is, a culturally specific essence that must remain inaccessible to objective sociological knowledge.²⁸²

Sociological causality yields to the “cultural paradigm”. New conceptual resources, for Asad, permit *outside* practices to *enter* the realm of existential possibility: “changes in the concept of the law in colonial Egypt [made] secularism thinkable as a practical proposition”. Through transformed “legal institutions, ethics, and religious authority”, Asad identifies the “emergence of social spaces within which ‘secularism’ could grow” into “the secularizing impulse”.³⁴⁸ It is a visibly Foucauldian methodology. Impulse implies lost self-mastery, as in intoxication or disease, within a “wider context of cultural change”. Indigenous “techniques of the self” (i.e., “cultural paradigm”) contrast with “impulsive modernity”. If “secularism did not exist”, it is because Asad deprives “secularism” of any possible meaning except colonial domination. Yet, historically, empirical instances of secular thought and practice do exist in the Muslim context.²⁸³ To circumvent this, empiricism is relinquished. Asad’s investigation is “not empirical”, but concerns “culturally distinctive concepts” (i.e., incommensurability).²⁸⁴ “Nationalism”, “democracy”, and “secularism” are tainted with uniquely colonial significance, against incommensurable “community”. “Incommensurability” is clarified when Asad argues that, to experience God, one must be raised and indoctrinated within the community at the *habitus* level – something impossible to outsiders. Ahmed’s sociological methodology cannot be understood as complementary with Asad’s ontological methodology, the substratum of which is the culturally authentic self.

Methodologically, Asad addresses deeper secrets of time.

282 Heidegger, *BT*, 77.

283 Ali Mirsepassi and Tadd Graham Fernée. Deen (Faith) and Donya (the Secular): Al-Ghazālī’s the “Alchemy of Happiness”. *English Studies at NBU*, 2019, 5(1), 9-39.

284 Asad, 209, 206.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time's* closing lines, implied a metaphoric relation where “time itself manifests itself as the horizon of being”, i.e., habitus invests value.²⁸⁵ The “Will to Knowledge” destroys our sensitivity to time gained through embodied practices, by maximizing technological efficiency. Asad writes: “[The] unification and extension of state power, and the accompanying triumph of European-derived codification, have together been seen as part of Egypt’s secularization and its progress toward the ‘rule of law’.”²⁸⁶ Hence, the “rule of law”, for example, is devoid of the multiple and conflicting meanings of Sen’s “antinomies” – as simultaneously the mask for colonial domination, the rationale for dictatorship, or the institutional basis for building a secure and pluralistic society based on the gains of human rights won through diverse mass struggles. For Asad, *one* possible meaning exists: the modern defilement of Islamic “lifeworld” purity through a nihilistic “Will to Knowledge”. Purportedly defending “Islam”, it is not an Islamic view per se. It is a postmodern view inflating Islam into an antimodernist abstraction.

Methodologically, Asad’s analysis dismisses the “empirical” to propose the deeper “categories” that were made popular through the Foucauldian “history of systems of thought”:

“The story historians tell is of course more complex, deals with particular times and places, and has resort to the motives (declared or inferred) of actors in a changing political field. But what interests me are the categories used in the story, and the attempt to explain aspects of it through them – such as ‘agency’, ‘tradition’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘ethics’, ‘freedom’.”²⁸⁷

Asad’s “categories” divide two culturally incommensurable worlds. The “historians” tell a version contaminated by modern Western “categories” of time. Asad therefore rejects sociological interpretations. Justice reforms conceived as “resisting imperialism”,

285 Heidegger, *BT*, 398.

286 Asad, 212.

287 Asad, 212.

or Islamic reform as “claiming political independence”, are “too instrumental”, presupposing a sociologically intelligible motive (i.e., linear cause/effect). Motive is a black box, a space of “multiple temporalities”, a cultural incommensurability thesis. Asad argues:

“New vocabularies (‘civilization’, ‘progress’, ‘history’, ‘agency’, and so on) are acquired and linked to older ones. Would be reformers, as well as those who oppose them, imagine and inhabit multiple temporalities”.²⁸⁸

Asad’s reference is to what Karen Barkey has called the Empire of Difference, which explains the “Ottoman success at maintaining imperial rule over a vast territory for many centuries” by way of “their intrinsic flexibility and ability to adapt”, fostering an “ability to absorb diverse populations and create new institutions and a new elite [...] linking Asia, Europe and Africa, encompassing an array of cultures, languages, peoples, climates, and various social and political structures [which included] visions and organizational forms of urban and rural, nomad and settled, Islamic and non-Muslim, Sunni Muslims, Shiites, and Sufi sects”.²⁸⁹ However, we have seen that Asad’s reference is not empirical but based on the “history of systems of thought”. This is why his concept of “multiple temporalities” could fit, only if read superficially, with Ahmed’s account of Egyptian cultural reform in the anti-colonial struggle. In fact, Asad’s contention clashes with Ahmed’s on the methodological level. Ahmed writes:

“Western feminists do not call for the abandonment of the entire Western heritage and the wholesale adoption of some other culture as the only recourse for Western women; rather, they engage critically and constructively with that heritage in its own terms. Adopting another culture as a general remedy for a heritage of misogyny within a particular culture is not only absurd, it is impossible.”²⁹⁰

288 Asad, 222.

289 Karen Barkey. *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7.

290 Ahmed, 128-129.

Upon examination, this argument corresponds to Sen's concept of identity as mobile and selective components without any fixed authentic order. Ahmed addresses the "social imaginary". (1) No society completely remakes itself from nothing to alter power relations (i.e., of gender), implying something like "multiple temporalities". But new concepts (i.e., humanism, equality) dynamize traditional concepts, as in Sen's "selected components": "Values that European Enlightenment and other relatively recent developments have made common and widespread cannot really be seen as part of a long-run Western heritage", a cultural "whole" (i.e., ontology), because they are "selective components" in a presence/absence dynamic. There is an interaction, not a contamination. It is creative, not tainting. Every culture contains multiple "components", both affirming and negating modern egalitarian values, in a struggle over "the diversity of value systems". Sen sees the "roots of modern democratic and liberal ideas in *constitutive* elements, rather than as a whole".²⁹¹ To consider the "whole" as an ontologically real identity is the doctrine of cultural purism, implying this "whole" can be diminished, polluted or compromised.

As Dewey argued, "the whole is imaginary".²⁹² This sociological emphasis on *choice over discovery* resembles Ahmed's argument. Transitional conceptual spaces contain "multiple temporalities", i.e., they are components from varying historic intervals, but they are aspects of a wide "social imaginary" whose resolution is a living and contemporary social creation. (2) The colonial situation, Ahmed argues, is no normal experience of transition. It is permeated through and through by the principle of capital, entwining all economic, political, military and ideological spheres. A violent ordeal of outside domination assaults culture, instigating exaggerated *ideological* embrace of invading culture, with "total" rejection of one's own. Ataturk or Iranian Constitutional revolutionary streams exemplify

291 Sen, *DF*, 233.

292 John Dewey. *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 18.

“the adaption without reservation of European civilization”.²⁹³ They are false and elitist ideologies, not ontological contamination. Above all, they are manifestations in the ideological sphere of the yielding of older tributary systems to the military-administrative units reflecting the new logic of global capitalism.

Therefore, although Asad agrees with Ahmed’s second point, his “multiple temporalities” fundamentally differ from Ahmed’s “selective components” as a methodology. Asad follows Heidegger’s path breaking “ontological” preoccupation with a “structure which is not pieced together, but rather a structure which is primordially and constantly whole”.²⁹⁴ Heidegger would have disdained Sen’s “selective components”, or the “social imaginary”. For Heidegger as for Asad, “tradition” is a compelling argument by itself. The cultural past is intrinsically worthy of transmission, beyond any ethical considerations that might negate or modify aspects of it. Asad sees “tradition”, properly understood, transcending the “modernist perspective”, which he characterises as “the passing on of an unchanging substance in homogenous time”. This *dichotomy* characterized 18th century Enlightenment writers (i.e. tradition is frozen “substance”, modernity is dynamic), and later Hegel (i.e. “History” is dialectical Totality, with the West occupying its summit). The Second Enlightenment rejected this doctrine. Neither Dewey nor Durkheim accepted “tradition” as “substance”, or time as “homogenous”, rejecting such metaphysics in favour of a multi-axial sociological view embedded in variations on the synchronic temporality defining the structuralist revolution. Asad’s “multiple temporalities” inflates the “modernist perspective” to a single *ontological impulse*, when in reality we are talking about one of various possible doctrines. It reduces multi-axial realities to a single cultural impulse.

293 Ali Mirsepassi. *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization. Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55.

294 Heidegger, *BT*, 37.

Accordingly, Asad's "Reconfiguration of Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt" combines "modernist" and "colonial" perspectives into one "homogenous" time conception:

"The concept of 'tradition' requires more careful theoretical attention than the modernist perspective gives it. Talking of tradition ('Islamic tradition') as though it was the passing on of an unchanging substance in homogeneous time oversimplifies the problem of time's definition in practice, experience, and event."²⁹⁵

"Practice" is Heideggerian "concreteness": a qualitative temporal experience, giving meaning and value. This ontological "lifeworld" is central to *Being and Time*, with the "scientific worldview" a secondary and superficial derivative in his methodology. Asad elaborates complex social realities in terms of Heideggerian "concreteness":

"Questions about the internal temporal structure of tradition are obscured if we represent it as the inheritance of an unchanging cultural substance from the past – as though 'past' and 'present' were places in a linear path down which that object was conveyed to the 'future'."²⁹⁶

Asad replicates Heidegger's "temporal exstasis", where tradition's "temporality" exceeds superficial modern "objectivity" in depth.²⁹⁷ Asad's "multiple temporalities" thus differ from the modernist "social imaginary": "The notion of invented tradition is the same representation [i.e., substantive, homogeneous] used subversively". Asad dichotomizes "modern" and "authentic" time, linking "tradition" to an *authoritative experience*, against the "homogeneous time of modern history":

"We make a false assumption when we suppose that the present is merely a fleeting moment in a historical teleology connecting past to future. In tradition the 'present' is always at the center ... time past authoritatively constitutes present practices [and] authenticating

295 Asad, 222.

296 Asad, 222.

297 Heidegger, *BT*, 330-339.

practices invoke or distance themselves from the past ... [this provides] a richer understanding of tradition's temporality."²⁹⁸

In Asad's methodology, Heideggerian conceptuality overrides the multi-axial political history of a world subordinated increasingly to the market mechanism, or the regime of capital. Asad's Islamic "temporality" is *incommensurable* with the "historical objectivity" that permits us to analyse this condition as a sociological problem. It has retained everyday intimacy with God, not through "coincidences apprehended within homogeneous time", but in experiences "intrinsic to time itself".²⁹⁹ Secular scholars' non-participatory *habitus* leaves them blind to God, in the perils of the "untaught body":

"The inability to 'enter into communion with God' not only becomes a function of untaught bodies but it shifts the direction in which authority for conduct can be sought".³⁰⁰

Methodologically, Asad, in this instance, follows Heidegger in foreswearing "ethics" in favour of "Fundamental Ontology". Only lifelong religious practitioners, perfecting *habitus*, see beyond the veil, recognizing the true source of authority in God. Those without this training are lost in the illegitimate authority of Godless secularism. The "shifting direction" is an *ontological* orientation. No space exists in Asad's Islam for the non-religious dissenter (i.e. only dissent within "traditional" frameworks). The Autonomy of Science principle certainly goes by the wayside in this Heideggerian scheme.

As two distinct methodologies, Asad's Heideggerian *purism* conflicts with Ahmed's fundamentally *dialectical* sociological analysis. Ahmed, while condemning British occupation of Egypt, writes:

298 Asad, 222-223.

299 Asad, 223.

300 Asad, 252.

“... in crucial ways the outcome of the process of change the encroachments set in motion was broadly positive, because the social institutions and mechanisms for the control and seclusion of women and for their exclusion from the major domains of activity in their society were gradually dismantled.”³⁰¹

Ahmed analyses institutional inclusivity-exclusivity patterns, promoting and restricting possibilities for public action. A “modernist” temporality obstructing God never figures in her reflections. Nor does Ahmed raise any possibility of a corresponding “authentic” politics as the antidote to “modernity”. Asad’s arguments reproduce the Heideggerianism underpinning Foucault’s writings.

Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonizing Egypt* (1988) also contains a pioneering Heideggerian methodological lens. It opens with Heidegger’s ‘The Age of the World Picture’: “The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as a picture”.³⁰² Colonialism reproduces the “correspondence” theory of scientific truth, “the isolated gaze”, where “the mind is set apart from the material world it observes”. The harm of colonialism, therefore, is epistemological. It “made a strange civilization into an object”.³⁰³ Undoubtedly Orientalism constituted part of the violence in the colonial arsenal – as ideological power. The question is which methodological alternative best provides clarificatory potential for contextualising the ideological history of Orientalism. For Mitchell, following his Heideggerian mentor, the source of harm is the unifying Western “worldview” sprung from modern science.

It is not, according to this methodological option, that colonialism used science to abuse the power provided by it over others. The problem is that colonialism viewed the world scientifically, an inherently coercive and violent epistemology. These are two very different claims. “Scientific” efforts to “order”

301 Ahmed, 127-128.

302 Timothy Mitchell. *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vi.

303 Mitchell, 8-9.

the world present a “series of mere representations, representing a reality outside”, a “labyrinth which includes within itself its own exits”.³⁰⁴ Egyptians see through “history, progress, culture and empire ... in a world where truth had become a question of what Heidegger calls ‘the certainty of representation’”.³⁰⁵ In the East, unlike Western “modernity”, “life was not yet lived as if the world were an exhibition”. It was a liberating “chaos of colour and detail”.³⁰⁶

Compare Deleuze and Guattari’s poststructuralist classic *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980): “transcendence is a specifically European disease”. Again, the Heideggerian *disease metaphor* appears. In “the East”, by contrast, a “rhizomatic model” (i.e., multiple roots) opposes the “Western model”. The West has “lost the rhizome”.³⁰⁷ “The East” is a “solution” to Western “modernity” in liberating primordial chaos, a postmodern anarchist utopia. For Mitchell, capitalism is not the motor of oppression. Instead, modern science has corrupted European culture:

“[Europeans] came from a place ... in which ordinary people were learning to live as tourists or anthropologists, addressing an object-world as the representation of something, and grasping personhood as the plaything of a cultural stage part or the implementation of a plan”.³⁰⁸

The unifying pressures of mercantile capitalism underlying the East India Companies and the Turkey Company, in their fundamental reshaping of military and economic power, or the legal pressures of a public realm protecting surplus accumulation from state power, fade into oblivion in social analysis guided by Heideggerian methodology. The sociological complexity of the

304 Mitchell, 10.

305 Mitchell, 7.

306 Mitchell, 22.

307 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 17-18.

308 Mitchell, 28.

colonial conjuncture is transformed into scientific “objectification”: “To colonize Egypt, to construct a modern kind of power . . . a plan or framework would create the appearance of objectness”.³⁰⁹ The modern “idea of progress”, *becoming over being*, as in Escobar and Chatterjee, explains colonial oppression.

By contrast, Ahmed defines Egypt’s 1970s *Infitah*, or “open-door policy”, as a system of dialectical linkages: xenophobia, gender politics, retreat from democratization and the public sector, interact with neo-imperialism and sudden wealth for the few. This constellation explains the crisis forcing half a million Egyptians to depart and seek work abroad. Sadat’s “unrealistic fantasy”, an “era of prosperity”, was a misguided policy choice within a complex power web.³¹⁰ The “idea of progress” threatening “innocence” was scarcely the root cause. No harmonious unity exists between the Heideggerian and sociological Left. Nietzschean “innocence” and Marx’s dialectical power analysis do not cohabite intelligibly as theoretical optics. Deleuze/Guattari blazed this 1960s trail, seeing “not dialectic but clashing modes of life”.³¹¹

This thesis trails back to Bataille’s claim: “conflict is life. Man’s value depends upon his aggressive strength”.³¹² This methodology, where ethics and objectivity are spurned, is intrinsically problematic and serves no clarificatory purpose. At best, it celebrates pre-modern social formations in which economies and religious life were conjoined, making exchange fundamental to the reproduction of group solidarity. But the methodological point is to understand capitalism in order to change it. Marx conceived scientific socialism to break away from utopian socialism. Now, many of his followers, faced with the disillusionment of the Cold War experience, have dragged Marx’s sociological legacy back into an unreal, utopian escapism.

309 Mitchell, 33.

310 Ahmed, 218-219.

311 Deleuze, Guattari, 8.

312 Wolin, *Seduction*, 28.

CHAPTER 2

The Two Circles of Violence and Progress

Methodology: Structure and Conjuncture

The methodology will follow a basic international relations template, based on the circulatory relation between the structural and the conjunctural dynamics:

“International relations are a millefeuille. They are deployed upon multiple registers, political, economic, technological, security, strategic, cultural and others. They have a historical depth – *structures* – and a present – a *conjuncture* – as well as a future – anticipations, projections, and plans. They occur within the frame of multiple moments, interstate, institutional, and transnational.”¹

The *structure* is the two historical circles of violence and progress; the *conjuncture* is in the revolutionary constellation of four moments. There is an exemplary articulation of the “scientific temper” as a contemporary transnational problematic in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate in Moscow. The larger problematic is in what Piketty has called the “history of equality”. The section on the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 makes the case for according methodological centrality to the logic of capitalism – albeit it through multiple social formations – for correctly understanding the issues

1 Serge Sur. *Relations Internationales* (Paris: LGDJ, 2021), 24.

discussed in the research. In conclusion, a comparative evaluation of sociological and ontological methodologies is assessed for this purpose, and a theory is proposed that combines two important 20th century theories into a synthesis: Karl Polanyi's concept of the "double movement" and Amartya Sen's idea of "capabilities".

The Problematic: The History of Equality

In his comparative history of inequalities between social classes and human societies, Thomas Piketty writes: "human progress exists, the march towards equality is a combat which can be won, but it is an uncertain combat, a social and political process which is fragile, always in the making and always in question".² His research documents two histories: the history of inequality, and the history of equality. Piketty identifies a "long term movement advancing towards increased social, economic and political equality over the course of modern history". It is neither "peaceable nor linear", but a story of "revolts and revolutions, of social struggles and crises which play a role in the history of equality", defined by "multiple setbacks" and "radical reconstructions of cultural identity".³ In the history of inequality, Piketty cites slavery and colonialism as central mechanisms in generating the wealth of the West and establishing radical and unprecedented global inequality.⁴ Piketty identifies the revolution of Saint-Domingue (Haiti) in 1791 as the major moment where a turning point towards equality is set in motion, signalling the "beginning of the end of slavery and colonialism".⁵ World War I has a seminal place in Piketty's history of equality, triggering what he calls the "great redistribution" of 1914-1980. Globally, there was:

2 Thomas Piketty. *Une brève Histoire de l'égalité* (Paris: Seuil, 2021), 29.

3 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 9.

4 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 75.

5 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 141.

“... no structural decrease in inequality prior World War I. What we see in the period 1870-1914 is at best a stabilization of inequality at an extremely high level, and in some respects an endless inegalitarian spiral, marked in particular by increasing concentration of wealth. It is quite difficult to say where this trajectory would have led without the major economic and political shocks initiated by the war. With the aid of historical analysis and a little perspective, we can now see those shocks as the only forces since the Industrial Revolution powerful enough to reduce inequality.”⁶

The history of increasing equality is, Piketty writes, a global process. Between 1914 and 1980 “inequality of revenue and property was strongly reduced in the entire Western world (UK, France, Germany, USA, Sweden, etc.), as well as elsewhere in Japan, Russia, China or in India, each following distinctive modalities”.⁷ Several points in Piketty’s account should be underlined: (1) the “inegalitarian spiral” preceding World War I, in which private capital accumulation led to the concentration of wealth in ever fewer hands – a trend which has resumed since the 1980s and continues today - had its rudimentary mechanisms in the violent history of slavery, colonialism and the exclusion of Western populations from access to political power during the critical phase of primitive accumulation. We will call this simultaneous explosion of wealth production and radical impoverishment combined with severe institutionalized oppression – Piketty’s history of expanding inequality- the circle of violence and progress. (2) Piketty emphasises how there is a countermovement – the history of equality – in the growth of greater socio-economic equality, as well as overall prosperity, and this change has resulted from the mechanism of “a greater direct participation by all, men and women, in social and economic life”, stemming from a history of “social and political struggles”.⁸

At one level, this self-protective mobilisation of populations is

6 Thomas Piketty. *Le Capital au XXIe siècle* (Paris : Points, 2020), 10.

7 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 177.

8 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 56.

what we have been discussing as “civil society”, and, at another, it is events like the 1917 October Revolution where the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. It was not clear what form the government would take. The rising had been in the name of the Soviets (i.e., workers’ councils). At a heated meeting of the Soviets, Bolshevik moderates declared: “it is vital to form a socialist government from all parties in the Soviet ... we consider that a purely Bolshevik government has no choice but to maintain itself by political terror. We cannot follow this course”.⁹ Although some Commissars resigned, Lenin recovered authority and the idea of the coalition government was abandoned. The October Revolution was the first self-conscious experiment at the national level to exit the circle of violence and progress, one outcome of the global World War I shock. Because of its mistakes, the October Revolution became a second circle of violence and progress. Lastly, the World War I shock was also the crucible that sired the Heideggerian wave – a self-professed “third way” between capitalism and communism – that we have already started to discuss in the preceding chapter.

Exemplary Articulation: The 1935 “Autonomy of Science” Debate, Ministry of Heavy Industries, Moscow

Heidegger and Michael Polanyi, both World War I veterans, experienced the apocalyptic world described in Louis Ferdinand Céline’s *Journey to the End of Night* (1932) and Ernst Junger’s *Storm of Steel* (1920). Both were disciples of Husserl, who had invoked the threat of a soulless technological world. The Husserlian intellectual revolution shaped their memories of visceral war experiences. The front generation was equally defined by the egalitarian new labour paradigm promoted by the Marxian 1917 October Revolution. For Heidegger, the Soviet Union was a “pincer” with the United

⁹ Duncan Townson. *Dictionary of Modern History 1789-1945* (London: Penguin, 1994), 615.

States, the twin embodiments of technological “nihilism”.¹⁰ For Polanyi, it provided fascination for a Hungarian democrat in the 1848 tradition, before disillusionment provoking lifelong critical reflection. The war, the revolution and phenomenology were defining historical events in the 20th century. The 1935 Autonomy of Science debate in Moscow opposed the dogmatic Stalinist ontology of “inevitability” to Polanyi’s many-sided social communication, or the pioneering concept of civil society as the motor of progressive change that is central to his major work *Personal Knowledge* (1958).

Polanyi was invited to the Ministry of Heavy industries in 1930s Moscow. His 1935 conversation with Bukharin, editor of party newspaper Pravda and leading Kremlin theoretician, exemplifies alternative 20th century Left “development” paths.¹¹ Both embraced modern science as a social ideal, discussing the “scientific” rationale for Soviet government conduct. This was essentially an epistemological argument. Bukharin declared “pure science”, truth-seeking regardless of extraneous influences, the illusion of contradictions in capitalist society. This implies a specific and very reductive view of what capitalism is, completely ignoring multi-axial realities, and reducing all explanations to the crude base-superstructure template. In fact, it is a tacit critique of civil society. Any independent initiative that we associate with an autonomous moral person, or rationality, is unnecessary once we sincerely embrace such a methodology. Individual and communal concerns harmonize as a “whole” through the Five-Year Plan.¹² Bukharin’s denial of an intrinsic link between economic development and political freedom constituted a denial of the central value in everyday

10 Martin Heidegger. *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 36.

11 Michael Polanyi. *The Tacit Dimension* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009), vii.

12 William Taussig Scott and Martin X. Moleski, S.J. *Michael Polanyi. Scientist and Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 154-155.

communication, for party dogma replaced its function in resolving the perennial contradictions of rapidly changing modern societies.

Polanyi was, above all, a physical chemist, a practicing scientist. For Polanyi, science was irreducible to “bourgeois” or “proletarian”, “Eastern” or “Western”. His social and provisional “objectivity” – everyday not cosmic - was later detailed in *Personal Knowledge* (1958), almost certainly following the “epistemic rupture” initiated in 1934 by Bachelard.¹³ “Facts” are not simply “there” to any “objective” mind, but become established through the many-sided social mediation of fact-checking institutional networks. But facts are not fictions (cultural for Heidegger, class for Bukharin). They are universal, requiring protection from abuse through a division of power. Polanyi’s vision of “objectivity”, we can recognise, is the intellectual forerunner of Sen’s concept of “positional objectivity”, discussed in the previous section.

Polanyi’s preoccupation was Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976), the Soviet biologist charged with 1930s Soviet agriculture, who had dismissed genes as “Western bourgeois” science, promising to boost crop yields by converting the arid interior into farmlands. As wheat and potatoes rotted, peasants resorted to eating tree bark and cannibalism, but Stalin ignored consequences and persisted in declaring Lysenko’s theory true. Polanyi recognized that unchecked state power over science monstrously perverted the “objective truth” that only *institutionally divided power* could defend. It is a deeply multi-axial vision of civil society as the creation of a principled legal separation of powers. It fails as a social theory to accord centrality to one principle as the organising structure shaping epiphenomena, that is, the thesis is devoid of a proper theory of capitalism.

In around 1930, Polanyi wrote, “the official doctrine of the USSR under Stalin” argued that “universality of science was now definitely repudiated”. It embraced anti-science through “inevitability” dogma. Universal truth is replaced by the “historically inevitable

13 Gaston Bachelard. *Epistémologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 7-16.

victory of future communist world-government".¹⁴ Tacitly, the military violence that is an unavoidable feature of any successful armed revolution is linked to an ontology of truth. Polanyi's reply to scientific "inevitability" was deceptively simple. Communication is essential to producing reliable scientific truth: "tacit personal interactions make possible the flow of communications, the transmission of social lore from one generation to the other and the maintenance of an articulate consensus".¹⁵ Two visions of "development" opposed silence and communication.

Left journalist Lincoln Steffens, visiting Lenin in 1917, illuminates Bukharin's *silence*: "Soviet Russia was a revolutionary government with an evolutionary plan ... They had set up a dictatorship, supported by a small, trained minority, to make and maintain for a few generations a scientific rearrangement of economic forces which would result in economic democracy first and *political democracy last*".¹⁶ By the 1930s, the peasant class was officially a "foreign country", the vestige of "capitalism", subject to renewed "primitive accumulation" in what Bukharin called a "feudal-military" strategy.¹⁷ Their "place" existed within a premade ontological labour schema. What "objectivity" grounded 1930s "scientific dictatorship"? If we want to identify this theoretical strain in Marx's own writings, we can point to his description of "communism as the riddle of history solved".¹⁸ But Marx was a far more nuanced dialectical thinker. Bukharin's argument voiced the "dialectics/ontology" confusion. Are Marxian dialectics: (1) a scientific method, i.e., epistemological dialectics; or, (2) a set of

14 Michael Polanyi. *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1974), 238.

15 Polanyi, *PK*, 212.

16 Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (London: Profile, 2013), 125.

17 Papaioannou, Kostas ed. *Les Marxistes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), 435-440.

18 Karl Marx. *Early Writings* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1984), 348.

laws governing the whole of reality (ontology), and the immanent movement of history (i.e., as in 1878 *Anti-Duhring*). The second circle of violence and progress posited “inevitability”. Lenin projected “dogmatic omniscience”, while “everything remained to be defined”.¹⁹ The silencing of labour is justified by a pure truth possessed by a ruling vanguard. This is surely a theoretical construct that would have appalled Marx, for whom “servility” was the worst possible human vice.²⁰

Polanyi’s *Tacit Dimension* (1966) opens with the Bukharin encounter.²¹ Polanyi was a Hungarian refugee, and Jewish convert to Christianity.²² His dialogic premise opposed Foucault’s formulation: “we cannot speak truth to power”.²³ If modern populations hope to survive autocratic regimes, speaking truth to power is worth risking one’s life for. This is so because these regimes systematically cover up the evidence, and replace it with official fictions, unconstrained by the type of institutionalised democratic checks promoted by Polanyi. Affirming the autonomous moral person, Polanyi was concerned with civil society pluralism, a *networks* theory patterned on the 1959 Hungarian Revolution. He called this the “Revolution of Truth” and “independent thought”, an event grounded in a wide civil society revolt: “the schools, universities, churches, academies, law courts, newspapers, and political parties” required an “institutional framework” grounded in “no fixed articles of faith” except the “right of moral self-determination”.²⁴

Polanyi linked the Dreyfus Affair and the Hungarian Revolution. A powerful government fell, in the Dreyfus Affair, and

19 Mark Mazower. *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London: Vintage, 2000), 119.

20 Bryan Magee. *The Great Philosophers* (London: BBC Books, 1987), 207.

21 Polanyi, *TD*, 3-4.

22 Scott/Moleski, 194.

23 Michel Foucault. *Histoire de la Sexualité. La Volonté de Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 13-15.

24 Polanyi, *PK*, 244-45.

a mass society was mobilized, through a decades-long information war over a politically engineered lie. Polanyi argues: the “widely extended network of mutual trust, on which the factual consensus of a free society depends, is fragile”, and warned against “allowing the state to fashion public facts almost at will”.²⁵ Polanyi’s core insight was the value of free and open communication grounded in the institutionalized legal division of power within a multi-centred civil society, requiring ethics without ontological content. This corresponds to Dewey’s 1934 argument on a “shifted centre” of “social gravity” in institutional proliferation in modernizing societies. What neither Polanyi nor Dewey adequately theorised was how capitalism was the dominating principle in these institutionally embedded experiences of multi-axial reality, providing the “historical center of gravity”.²⁶

The Autonomy of Science debate highlighted the concept of “democracy” imagined between “form” and “content”. Bukharin embraced “direct”, not “bourgeois”, democracy. “Direct democracy” is the elective affinity uniting Marxian and Heideggerian imaginaries. Rousseau’s rejection of “representative” institutions inspired Marx, prefiguring the Heideggerian ideal of a localized peasant community. Uniform interests in a classless society dispense with any need for representative institutions. There is no conflict where “uniform interests” prevail, in either a “classless society” or an ideal peasant community. Where “uniform interests” prevail, “political form” becomes irrelevant. Against political *form* (i.e., power division), the inherent goodness of a class – an ontological claim about *content* - underpins the ideal. For Marx, “true democracy involves the disappearance of the state”. The state-civil society separation occurs because “society is an organism of solidarity and homogeneous interests”.²⁷

This drift into organicism is a real problem in Marxian theory

25 Polanyi, *PK*, 241.

26 Heilbroner, 85.

27 Bottomore, 142-143.

that many of Marx's followers refuse to face. This is unfortunate indeed because Marx saw his work as social science, and, hence, open to scientific modification, not as dogma. Bukharin thus believed the sheer speed of Soviet technological revolution would pre-empt the consolidation of a dominant political class.²⁸ The argument appeared in Lenin's *State and Revolution*, where the "state is not abolished but withers away" in a future community of uniform interests.²⁹

Polanyi's *Tacit Dimension* (1966) influenced Sen's own ethical investigation of "responsible human action".³⁰ Although "content" cannot be depended upon to build free societies, nor is "form" sufficient. Exclusive reliance on "form" is what Sen has called "institutional fundamentalism". This is, of course, an argument for the centrality of civil society. Polanyi used the term "conviviality" to describe what we call civil society. It is less a doctrine than an existential space of trust, lore, values, and communication.³¹ It is the sociological "lifeworld", derived from a core concept in Husserlian phenomenology. The "lifeworld" combines "form" and "content" as a concept for understanding democracy.

Two concepts define Polanyi's "lifeworld": (1) *Networks*: in the Austria-Hungary Pre-World War I political crisis, a multi-centred and autonomous civil society grew from the Hungarian trade union explosion (10,000 to 100,000 textile unions between 1902 and 1908), and minority rights movements, culminating in a general strike and the 1912 Bloody Thursday crackdown. (2) *Ethic of Reconciliation*: A World War I Austro-Hungarian medical officer, Polanyi witnessed mass mutilation and contagious disease, becoming cold to the cadavers, and "no longer recognizing himself". Ideologies of permanent war, following a 1919 Hungarian Civil War experience of alternate Communist and White Terror

28 Papaioannou, 415.

29 Lenin, 12-18.

30 Polanyi, *TD*, xii.

31 Polanyi, *PK*, 212-243.

governments, the latter throwing Jews *en masse* into the Danube, shaped Polanyi's ethics. Polanyi's saw "commitment to truth and freedom of thought" in the 1920 Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement. The same 1928 notebook analyses his study of Soviet economic development – identifying its weakness in the "fanaticism of considering all other opinions as devilish".³² Both observations underline the autonomous moral person as a principle of social rationality, a comparative and transnational optic grounding meaningful social communication. All of this underpinned Sen's main idea in the seminal *Development as Freedom* (1999).

In the 1936 Great Purge, Bukharin's tapped phone calls resulted in his 1938 execution following a show trial employing the official lies he had defended. Nasser later reproduced the Bukharin ideological line to defend Egyptian state repression of dissent. Nehru rejected it citing the Ethic of Reconciliation. Two fundamentally different "development" experiences resulted. The 1956 Hungarian revolution, Polanyi argued, did not reassert 18th century "absolute values", but expressed "a specific tradition of thought", committed to "the independent growth of science, art, and morality", grounded in an "orthodoxy which specifies no articles of faith".³³ The Indian National Movement "did not require any particular political or ideological commitment from its activists" and did not "try to limit its following to any social class or group" provided that "the commitment to democratic and secular nationalism was there".³⁴ In these similarities we see what Marc Bloch called "traces": out of the void of the past, "traces" remain which show the nature of phenomena we can no longer perceive in the present.³⁵ These

32 Scott/Moleski, 23, 47, 33, 50-51, 109.

33 Polanyi, *PK*, 244.

34 Chandra, Bipan. Mukherjee, Mridula. Mukherjee, Aditya. Panikkar, K.N., Mahajan, Sucheta. *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), 79.

35 Bloch, 106.

“traces” provide occasions for causal explanation, by showing regularity or certain sequences of occurrence.

Polanyi was a Left Liberal and Bukharin a “right” Soviet Marxist, both embracing 18th century Enlightenment egalitarianism while critiquing 19th century plutocratic Liberalism. Both were therefore important voices in what Piketty has called the “history of equality”. Although neither anticipated the later emergence of Heideggerian-Marxist “culturalism”, embracing “difference”, it already had its precursor in 18th century Catholic anti-secularists like Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821). His denial of “universal man”, defending “multiple communities” entitled to local hierarchies, denies the equality principle in favour of the differentiating ontologies of occupational inevitability.³⁶ The 1930s Autonomy of Science debate broached the circle of violence and progress from two perspectives within the history of the struggle for equality.

Structure: Two Historical Circles of Violence and Progress

Three principal “antinomies” define the two historical circles of violence and progress. The first opposes *economic* and *political* sources of social power: any modern nation is built upon a multi-class and capitalist basis, whose inherently hierarchic structure undermines the equality principle. How, therefore, can an equitable society be built? We should immediately note: “all societies that have made the leap from primitive communities into civilizations, a leap associated with the rise of the centralized state, has been for the purpose of the extraction of surplus”. This is not unique to capitalism. Hence, from the “enhanced organizational capacities of the state arose the monumental works of Egypt and Persia, the Incan and Mayan empires, the dynastic kingdoms of India and China”. However, the “decisive difference between the character of the surplus products of these tributary societies and that of capitalism” is that in tributary societies “wealth appeared

36 Wolin, *Seduction*, 5.

in the form of goods and services devoted to luxury consumption, to the maintenance and deployment of armed force, to religious edifices, or to display". Wealth was embodied in use-values. The central logic of capitalism, by contrast, is the "use of wealth in various concrete forms, not as an end in itself, but as a means for unceasingly gathering more wealth".³⁷ This is why capitalism is unique as a circle of violence and progress. It expands infinitely, at least in the future that is imagined by capitalists.

The postrevolutionary USSR unsuccessfully aspired to solve the "antinomy" of economic and political sources of social power by liquidating entire social classes, producing "new" upward mobility space, and through the forced labour Marx had sworn to overcome. Marx had identified the original circle of violence and progress in "primitive accumulation": in every society defined by early industrial and agricultural breakthrough, effective democracy for working people had been extremely limited. Democracy – rights to vote, to organize – *followed* industrialization, with labour initially organized coercively by uncontrolled market forces and state violence. Populations were reduced to commodities, in the formative consolidation of capitalism, rendering citizenship and civil society meaningless.

The second circle of violence and progress was an experiment in overcoming the first. The Bolsheviks sought to overcome the intrinsic modernisation-violence linkage. Could an excruciating transition to industrial socialism be avoided? Lenin, Trotsky and associates projected that with Bolshevik Revolutionary success, revolutionary Russia would inspire and assist the working classes of advanced industrial nations in new socialist revolutions. The transnational industrial wealth rendered available by these revolutions in richer countries would create an assistance fund for Russia and other less developed countries. It was a vision of global wealth redistribution. Industrialization would transpire without

37 Heilbroner, 34-35.

economic austerity or political oppression. Reality negated the projection. Only two defeated World War I nations, Germany and Hungary, came near to having socialist revolutions. The military refused these revolutions, crushing popular uprisings. Without “hegemonically” winning over the military, revolutions fail.

The “second antinomy” is military and political sources of social power. The physical, lethal violence of military power is not exchangeable with political power as unified regulators of social life.³⁸ The military-political “antinomy” ensnared the Nasserite “development” experiment in a pattern that we can identify in many countries across Africa and indeed elsewhere as they surfaced from the colonial yoke and aspired to protect their national independence under transnational capitalist pressures. The nature of the “second antinomy” becomes visible in the work of Agyeman-Duah on military coups and regime change in West Africa, where he makes an argument for path dependency: “The political-development model postulates that the nature of the process by which new states are formed affects their conflict behaviour”.³⁹ Path dependency concerns the interaction of institutional and structural constraints. The old pathway is hard to escape, making countries captives of path dependency, which can be traced back to a historically important event, or critical juncture in the development of the country. In the USA, the reference may be the adoption of a democratic constitution or the Civil War. In France, it might be the revolution and the adoption of the Napoleonic code, while for China, the revolution of 1949. These events set each country on a course that is difficult to change. The leaders of the time of these various junctures rise above the historical horizon and identify a hitherto unknown destination, where human agency momentarily prevails

38 Michael Mann. *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), xiii.

39 Baffour Agyeman-Duah. “Military Coups, Regime Change, and Interstate conflicts in West Africa.” *Armed Forces and Society*. Vol. 16, No. 4, summer 1990, 547-576.

over deeply entrenched institutional or structural constraints.⁴⁰ The critical juncture in the modern history of African countries, Goran Hyden argues, is the achievement of political independence. We can understand its meaning only comparatively. Timing is important, that is, it is a conjunctural phenomenon.

Comparing Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast, Agyeman-Duah writes: “Early postcolonial regimes shared a common character of nationalism but differed in terms of ambition, development strategies, and domestic and internal politics”, between propounding “socialist development and the cause of Pan-Africanism (Guinea, Ghana)” and opposing “socialism and the grandiose ambition for continental government (Nigeria, Ivory Coast)”. Despite these differences, Agyeman-Duah observes that: “During the early post-independence period military establishments were apolitical: they respected the principle of neutrality in political matters, something ingrained through colonial training”. However, we soon witness a change:

“In 1963, the military broke out of the colonial cocoon with their first regional coup in the Dahomey. One civilian regime after another fell victim to the rising political consciousness of the armed forces. By 1985, only Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal, the Gambia, and Cape Verde proved invincible to the onslaught. States such as Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Benin (former Dahomey) experienced multiple successful and countless attempted coups”.⁴¹

Agyeman-Duah explains how although the “causes of military revolts are many and varied”, we cannot explain them purely by “intramilitary variables”. We require recourse to “domestic variables such as low regime legitimacy, structural fragility, cultural heterogeneity, and external elements such as direct or indirect foreign intervention (i.e., the American CIA incitement

40 Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 26-27.

41 Agyeman-Duah, 551.

of the Ghanaian military to overthrow Nkrumah in 1966)".⁴² Agyeman-Duah concludes his discussion by observing the degree of "malleability among military regimes in West Africa", noting how some "metamorphose into civilian regimes, other maintain their military character and forge alliances with civilian elites". However, "when all major governing bodies are filled with soldiers and no political changes can occur without military sanction, it is reasonable to regard such a regime as military in nature".⁴³

There is a still deeper methodological implication once we have examined the findings of Hyden and Agyeman-Duah. We need to look at the movement legacy, not merely the colonial legacy, as the determinant of development. Independence was achieved not by political parties but social movements. We can build on Agyeman-Duah's insight by relating his discussion to the work of Gunn on the history of the one-party state in Africa and its intrinsic relation to military power. Gunn notes that "the period of decolonisation was marked by a creation of political parties for the conquest and management of power", a "tendency which continued over the first years of independence in Africa". Gunn elaborates this in terms of a transnational conjuncture:

"From 1950, a proliferation of political parties will be founded throughout colonial Africa. The action of the United States of America and of the Soviet Union in favor of people under domination for their freedom, the independence of India in 1947, of Ghana in 1956, the Bandung Conference of 1955, the Indochina war of liberation (1947-1954) and the Algeria War (1954-1962), were the important elements of the emancipation of the colonised people and the proliferation of political parties."⁴⁴

However, Gunn proceeds to explain how this transnational

42 Agyeman-Duah, 551.

43 Agyeman-Duah, 552.

44 Jean-Philippe Gunn. "The single party in Africa. Nature, evolution, and role in the political governance, from the Independence period to the present days". *Social Sciences Studies Journal*. Vol. 4, Issue 21, 2018, 3531-3538.

and conjunctural multi-party dynamic yielded to the model of the one-party state as newly independent nations entered a new conjuncture:

“The political life of young African States was stopped abruptly by the intervention of the army, an institution of the modern State. The first military coup in Togo opened the way for a series of changes from political regimes into military ones. The single parties were an invention of military governments”.⁴⁵

They were also, Gunn notes, “the work of civilians”, for the “single party was the party that embodied the struggle for independence under colonisation and the party leader became the head of State and party leader”. Gunn explains: “These parties have enjoyed legitimacy with the local populations, and leaders were seen as liberators and fathers of independence”. This fact reflected a “hard struggle and long period of decolonisation”, where, “in the logic of the ‘consolidation of the state’ and ‘nation-building’, the opposition parties were removed through political elimination and the state was personalised with the rise of authoritarian leaders”. It follows that “democracy was not the priority and the single party was considered as the legitimate option and the best way for a rapid development and national integration”. Gunn explains that “in this logic, several single parties grew in Africa with a leitmotif like rally, revolution, unity, etc.” This produced its own conjuncture, wherein the catalytic dynamic resulted in a specific type of national politics: “The absence of competition immediately put the party in a strong position and authoritarianism is characterised by coercive and violent methods, absence of individual and collective freedoms, bad political governance, and poor economic and social systems”.⁴⁶ We come to the core issue in the “antinomy” of military and political power, a feature defining the majority of 20th century post-colonial nation-making experiences not only in Africa but

45 Gunn, 3532.

46 Gunn, 3533.

elsewhere. It concerns of a sequential imagining of historical change in developing nations:

“The single party is considered as the best option for economic and social development. [It] must set an ‘authoritarian transition’ and provide the State with a political order, laws and conditions for successful economic and social development. Once these conditions are fulfilled, democracy and citizen participation can be updated.”⁴⁷

This sequential construction of historical change in developing nations reflects a mythic dichotomy between “equality” and “efficiency” that defines the kernel of the ideology that came later to be known as “neo-liberalism”, in the idea that “wealth must be created before it can be distributed”. The economist Eloi Laurent has captured this succinctly:

“Beyond even the social conditions of the creation of value, we must critically interrogate the primacy given in neo-liberal mythology to production over redistribution. Supposing that the contemporary crisis of inequality was to entirely destroy all economic dynamism? Even more fundamentally, supposing it were necessary to completely reverse the logic of arguments based on the neo-liberal myth, to show that the redistribution of wealth is the very thing that conditions the possibility of successful economic development?”⁴⁸

Laurent argues that the sequential myth, which justifies provisional inequality in the name of efficiency, requires deconstruction in favour of a more realistic vision of a circulatory relation between economic growth and social justice. This is essentially Gunn’s description of the ideology of the one-party state in post-colonial contexts, which envisions freedom *after* economic growth has been achieved. Gunn underlines the significance of this type of nation-making politics for civil society, in terms of “the restriction of freedoms of association and the prohibition of

47 Gunn, 3534.

48 Eloi Laurent. *Nos mythologies économiques* (Paris : Les Liens qui Libèrent Editions, 2016), 32.

the struggles of social classes”, with a ruling party “based on a pyramidal structure”, with “decisions taken by a political board”, and “prohibiting the proliferation of political parties or any activity that does not reflect the aspirations of the regime”.⁴⁹ These visions of the military pattern in post-colonial nation-making apply precisely to Nasserite Egypt. The Nasserite regime sought to artificially impose military-civilian unity, the absolute negation of Polanyi’s critique of Soviet civilian dictatorship in the *Autonomy of Science* debate.

Because the projected social revolutions failed to materialise in the developed capitalist countries of Western Europe, Soviet industrialization was forced to depend upon its own resources.⁵⁰ Therefore the original ethical vision went by the wayside as a matter of necessity. To accumulate the required capital for economic transformation, while generating the heavy industry for military defence, industrialization with maximum rapidity was the sole option. These pressures produced appalling violence. In 1920s-30s Soviet industrialization, peasants, whose agricultural productivity was to finance heavy industry, endured organized rural class war, with one million kulak families deported to Siberia. Hundreds of thousands resisting collectivization were removed from family into forced labour in new industrial centres. The conflict created a famine in which several million died. For industrial workers, trade unions were controlled to accelerate industrial productivity, a one-party system controlling mass media, peasant collectives and the arts.

We should acknowledge Soviet achievements. Over the course of two decades a country of peasants and farmers became an industrial superpower with atomic bombs, a literate population with access to electricity and employment, and free healthcare and education. But social rights came at the cost of political rights. While

49 Gunn, 3534.

50 Theda Skocpol. *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 90.

catalysing spectacular industrial growth, regime fears of counter-revolution motivated the 1930s purges. Thousands were executed and deported, while ordinary citizens were reduced to political impotence. The pervasive 20th century template of the one-party system, almost ubiquitous in post-independence Africa, was thereby born. We therefore must similarly acknowledge the achievements of Nasserite Egypt. There was a rapid and unprecedented increase in living standards under Nasser, access to housing, education, employment and healthcare. There was agrarian reform and major development achievements such as the Helwan steel works, the Aswan High Dam, and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. As with the Soviet experience, however, political rights were sacrificed even as social rights advanced, upon the sequential premise that the two categories of rights were incompatible. The military logic of the regime took its toll, when, in the later 1960s, the military quagmire of the North Yemen Civil War pulled the Egyptian economy into a severe downturn.

The third “antinomy” opposes ideological and political sources of social power, illustrated in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate. Political institutions as such cannot function as a replacement for the free imaginative and dialogic experience of direct collective participation through the lifeworlds. A discourse of “inevitability” legitimized Soviet violence, pursuing total ideological unification and some notion of utopian perfection. The leaders of the Russian Revolution were essentially correct to see that modern societies were becoming entrenched within a system of hierarchies and conspicuous inequalities of power and consumption, and that the fundamental cause was the logic of uncontrolled capitalist efforts to obtain limitless wealth. However, the Bolsheviks were entirely and tragically mistaken in their dogmatic idea of humanity being forced forward through historical stages, which suppressed the crucial reality of communities making their own conscious decisions of how to live as an integral force in every political process. This is what Castoriadis meant about the social imagination as creating

a world: there is a freedom of movement, a freedom to disobey which can shape new social realities through diverse types of social experimentation, all of which do not lead inexorably to hierarchies and conflicts, and which do not all yield to one all-powerful mode of social organisation.

In terms of the nuts and bolts of nation-making in postcolonial contexts, Castoriadis' rather abstract ideas mean that the organized regulation of social life requires *a pluralistic anti-system*. Here was the core insight of Congress leadership in the Indian freedom struggle. The third "antinomy" teaches the "social imaginary", the self-defeating futility of "ontological politics" to restore failed social relationships, i.e., what Polanyi called "conviviality" and we now call civil society. The Non-Alignment Movement, as a landmark in International Relations history, was therefore torn apart ideologically from within even with the signing of the Declaration of Brijuni on July 19 1956 in Yugoslavia. It was the consequence of a negative rather than positive ideological feature: "the objectives of the Non-Alignment Movement always carried a certain ambiguity. Its central inspiration was negative, that of rejecting domination by outside power blocs".⁵¹

Conjuncture: A Revolutionary Constellation of Four Moments

Out of the social revolution of World War I carnage, four interconnected revolutionary moments grew. The Russian Revolution (1917), the Turkish Independence War (1919-23), the Egyptian Revolution (1919) and the Indian Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), a transnational constellation, thrust the "citizenship" question to the heart of failed social relationships in the post-war world.⁵² Empires are based on subjects, not

51 Sur,136.

52 Noor-Aiman I. Khan. *Egyptian-Indian Nationalist Collaboration and the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 53.

citizens. The modern land empires – the Ottoman, the Russian, the Austro-Hungarian, and the Chinese – all collapsed during or just prior to World War I, yielding to national forms of authority intended to more effectively defend their territories from the new global web of colonial conquest. The European seaborne empires were, partly as a result of new nationalisms, severely shaken by the World War I conflict – itself a culmination of colonial rivalries – before being dismantled between the 1940s and the 1970s.

This conjuncture constituted a global revolution. As Piketty writes: “The massive accumulation of wealth by Western states since the Industrial Revolution could not have happened without a global division of labour and unchecked exploitation of the natural and human resources of the planet”.⁵³ New mass-based nation-states created a transnational “social imaginary” through anti-colonial struggle, yet the Soviet experience became the central ideological region of density. Soon after the October Revolution, “Lenin and Stalin called upon the peoples of the East to overthrow the imperialist ‘robbers and enslavers’”.⁵⁴ In 1920, the Bolsheviks organised the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, while the Comintern helped established communist parties across Asia. The unequivocal anti-imperialism of the Soviet Union made it transnationally attractive to Indian, Egyptian, Persian, and Turkish activists. Lenin followed events in India and China closely, saying: “the outcome of the struggle depends in the last resort on the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., constitute the vast majority of mankind”.⁵⁵ It was in this spirit of a global democratic anti-colonial vision that Nehru compared Russia to India:

“Both are vast agricultural countries with only the beginnings of industrialisation, and both have to face poverty and illiteracy. If Russia

53 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 312.

54 Pankaj Mishra. *From the Ruins of Empire. The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Penguin, 2012), 195.

55 Mishra, 195

finds a satisfactory solution for these, our work in India is made easier".⁵⁶

Soviet Russia certainly found a solution, but its complete sacrifice of political rights to social rights - following a sequential historicism - undermined the credibility of its own claims to be an emancipatory force. The second human rights wave, nevertheless, focused on wages, work conditions, and social freedoms, defined a new "social imaginary" linking "citizenship" and "development" as double aspects of human emancipation. A structural explanation is required to understand the second human rights horizon. It is impossible to even imagine any meaning in struggles over wages, work conditions and social freedoms unless the two specific and necessary conditions for the rise of capitalism are already historically in place: "the separation of producers from their conditions and means of production (land and instruments of production), and the primitive accumulation of capital in the hands of capitalists ready to bring together the two again under their domination".⁵⁷

Lenin's theory of imperialism called for liberation movements in countries oppressed by one nation systemically appropriating the surplus labour of another. His inspiring call held such power because it drew from the creative capacity of the social imagination to create alternative social realities through diverse types of social experimentation. The 1917 Russian revolution archetypally became a mirror, replacing the broken heap of World War I images. Law had protected bourgeois property, including slaves as property, a ruling regime that "would tear down the world if it paid".⁵⁸ From the middle-class limits of public opinion, "justice" was re-imagined in terms of economic as well as political power. This entailed a revolution in the concept and practice of law. The

⁵⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru. *Soviet Russia. Some Random Sketches and Impressions* (Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1928), 5.

⁵⁷ Chandra, *Making*, 294.

⁵⁸ Marshall Berman. *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 100.

new social state as a paradigm championed the labouring masses of peasants and workers in collectivism, planned economy and social equality. This conjunctural feature was present as much in Soviet experimentation as in President Roosevelt's First New Deal Program (1933-35) which aimed to restore public confidence and relieve the plight of fourteen million unemployed, to ending child labour, limiting working hours, promoting collective bargaining, and introducing major public works legislation (i.e., Tennessee Valley Authority, Civilian Conservation Corps, and Works Progress Administration).⁵⁹

Marxian theory shed light on the modern state as not merely a constructive force, as the New Deal exemplifies, but also more darkly as part of a structure of economic domination. The South had vivid experience of the direct use of state power, diplomatic and military, to protect economic activity, and the naked political coercion entwined with construction of those public works – canals, railways and highways – essential to capitalist growth. In the 1915-6 Volta-Bani revolt against French rule (between Burkina Faso and Mali) an estimated 30,000 Africans were slaughtered. The human cost was massive also in terms of disease, famine and enslavement. All such suffering was part of an economic regime where tax revenues and plunder flowed from subject territories to the imperial centre. Labour processes, not European culture as the 18th century Enlightenment had held, redefined humanism at a global level in a new material ethics articulated by figures like Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) who invented the pioneering “drain theory” of empire in *Poverty and un-British rule in India* (1901).⁶⁰ The practical corollary to these new social imaginings was in Russian revolutionaries multiplying transnational networking possibilities, undercutting elitist pre-World War I alliances, through

59 Jan Palmowski. *Dictionary of Twentieth-Century World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 441.

60 Bipan Chandra. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1984), 110-112.

flows in collaborators and funding. The Communist Parties of India and Egypt shaped anti-colonial nationalist struggles, and, at least for India, important post-independence horizons that lifted populations out of centuries of misery and oppression.

Marxism re-envisioned humanism in terms of the universal predicament of labour conditions under global capitalism, effecting a revolution in the transnational “social imaginary” of the post-World War I upheaval. Within this space, we see very clearly with hindsight, *military* and *civilian* power diverged as two distinct nation-making possibilities. The Turkish Independence War (1919-23), by repelling imperial domination, escaped the plight of its Arab neighbours. A neo-colonial system, by sustaining dictators, suppressed regional aspirations for independence and prosperity. British and French divide and rule fabricated fourteen countries lacking religious, ethnic, and linguistic cohesion. Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Egypt and the Sudan were placed under the control of sheikhs, emirs, and kings. Decades of anti-regime rebellions and coups failed, filling the deserts with the victims of oppression.⁶¹ Hence, the great prestige invested in Ataturk. He symbolized an alternative future. It was an authoritarian, mono-ethnic vision of the future, a nation-state modelled on the French revolutionary ideal of homogeneity.⁶² Nasser was inspired by the Ataturk model. Gandhi closely watched Turkey, announcing that “the world over, we hear the cry of *swarajya*.”⁶³ Yet Gandhi had grave reservations concerning that model, promoting the hitherto unimagined ideal of the multi-cultural nation as the quintessence of a democratic social order. The Turkish Independence War remade the transnational anti-colonial “social imaginary”. Yet symbols of oppression and protection sometimes become interchangeable and confused.

61 Said K. Aburish. *Nasser: The Last Arab* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 5.

62 Fernée, *EV*, 196-244.

63 Gandhi, *CW* 8, 421.

Gandhi employed multi-centred horizontal power in India's mass-based freedom struggle, emphasising "citizen action", spurning vertical "power seizure" on the French Revolutionary model. As in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate, Gandhi emphasized *independent thought and action*, spurning the traditional military paradigm of top-down homogeneity in an inside/out dichotomy. Silence and fixity constitute deference in military etiquette. The Gandhian paradigm mobilized everyday masses under an organizational regime of non-violence, while the military paradigm centred the monumental moment. At the 1938 National Planning Committee, Nehru articulated a gradualist and inclusive ethic:

"If even the foundation is laid in men's minds a great national task will have been done ... Ultimately it is not the Committee that will decide the future of India or of its political or economic organisation but the people of India who will take the final decision ... Perhaps one of the most important and desirable consequences of our work is to make people think of planned work and cooperative society."⁶⁴

Nehru's statesmanship followed the Gandhian legacy of a multi-centred nationalism *without essence*, a non-violent mass revolution in non-military "citizen" capabilities. Gandhi made the everyday power underlying the impermanence of ordinary people the new driving force through mass Satyagraha campaigns: Non-Cooperation (1919–22) and Civil Disobedience (1930–31) Movements combined the efforts of thousands, transcending the metropolitan elite to involve workers, peasants and villages in organized mass participation. The Indian freedom struggle was unique among the four revolutionary moments, breaking from a military pattern in an expanded circle of moral consideration and emphasis on "citizen" capabilities. These defined a new transnational "social imaginary", a genuine alternative to the

64 Jivanta Schottli. *Vision and Strategy in Indian Politics. Jawaharlal Nehru's Policy Choices and the Designing of Political Institutions* (London: Routledge, 2012), 142.

Leninist concept of a vanguard of dedicated revolutionaries that had inspired Sun Yat-Sen's Guomindang Nationalist Party as well as Mao in the Chinese context.⁶⁵

Ataturk, in contrast to the Gandhian nation-making vision, privileged homogenous identity, the eradication of minorities, and the rule of military violence, following the French Revolutionary "social imaginary". The state was an "instrument" transforming society according to a "universal" blueprint of "modern civilization." This negated autonomous civil society and public action on the historicist grounds of "national immaturity". Traditionally marginalized populations, i.e., women, were given public visibility and new rights. Turkish women were given the right to vote in 1930, before France (1944) and Switzerland (1971).⁶⁶ However, the entire Turkish population was denied the possibility of creating state-independent autonomous organizations. Populations "outside" the state plan of "modernity" were deemed primitive throwbacks or not to exist (i.e., Kurds). A "divide and rule" discourse defined the post-independence Turkish nation-making process. These experiences gave living embodiment to the abstract issues debated in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate, as did the Gandhian experience.

Egypt's post-World War I national movement excluded the illiterate majority, based in newspapers. Yet the 1919 multi-class and multi-religious revolution included the illiterate and women, affirming Liberal Nationalist S'ad Zaghlul's (1857-1927) mass-basis. The 1919 mass labour uprising erupted independently of Wafd leadership. It forced the mass mobilization option onto an upper-class conservative leadership who had feared mass agitation. This was an opportunity to follow alternate roads. Zaghlul endeavoured to represent Egypt's Coptic community while enlisting middle class support for a non-violent independence campaign.

65 Mishra, 289.

66 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 266.

He was arrested and deported to Malta in 1919.⁶⁷ Class divisions coincided with ethnic and national divisions. Yet the uprising exerted such pressure that Britain conceded independence in 1922. The 1923 Constitution demonstrated the potential to root a civilian-led mass movement, even as Empire lingered, compromised but controlling.⁶⁸ Civilian leadership elitism and collaborationism sabotaged this. Social issues were neglected, Egypt's mass movement remained unorganized. The great unifying momentum from the 1906 Denshawai repression and the war-time sacrifices were a lost opportunity. Lingering colonial control caused the Wafd to gradually undermine its own credibility. From the 1924 caliphate crisis to the 1950 legitimacy crisis, mass disorder and widespread calls for a "just tyrant" resulted from a systemic failure of civilian rule. A crisis of "institutional-capabilities" explains the trajectory of Egypt's "social imaginary".

The Four Moments were transnationally interactive, a demonstration of the multiple possible narratives accompanying the impersonal processes of developing capitalist economies, exploding Lenin's thesis of a "highest stage of capitalism" before World War I and revealing the limits of his reductive definition of the modern state as simply "an instrument for the suppression of one class by another", destined to "wither away" after the socialist revolution.⁶⁹ What we see instead is what Piketty defined as a general movement towards reduction of "inequality of revenue and property" among diverse countries from Russia to China and India, with "each following distinctive modalities".⁷⁰ It is a story of difference which

67 Joel Benin, Zachary Lockman. *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 1998), 89.

68 Nadav Safran. *Egypt in Search of Political Community. An analysis of the intellectual and political evolution of Egypt 1804-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 50-63.

69 Lenin, 22.

70 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 177.

underlines the “antinomy” of ideological and political sources of power. Yet there were practical techniques linking these diverse experiences, showing how distinctive transnational imaginings are threaded together. Targeted assassination was the first 20th century India to Egypt export.⁷¹ British authorities were officially startled by interrelated India-Egypt uprisings. In April 1919, the British Government telegraphed the Government of India to ascertain connections. It learned how “Egyptian methods, such as cutting railway and telegraph lines, are being reproduced here”. A 1922 Egyptian mass boycott of British goods was triggered by Indian information.

A multi-centred discursive-practical circulation therefore created new belongings and identities through conflicting “social imaginaries”. This exemplifies what Piketty called “radical reconstructions of cultural identity”.⁷² What requires elucidation are the “distinctive modalities” of each nation-making experience. In the same paradigm of a development scenario - India and Egypt - both were exposed to Western style administrative set ups, with similar institutional underpinnings peculiar to the Western nation-state. But institutions provide only a limited explanation of trajectories. The national narratives forged through social movements have great practical consequences in the nation-making process. There are complex and multidimensional structural and conjunctural elements. Beyond the different discursive takes on “freedom” - organic or multi-cultural – we find that Mann’s four sources of social power provide an effective template for representing the interactions of institutions and lifeworlds. We can thereby understand how and why the Western-style institutions bequeathed by colonialism behaved differently in non-Western contexts. We almost certainly require a dialectical methodology, what Hegel called “thinking pure change or contradiction”, but this requires no sacrifice of

71 Khan, 78.

72 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 9.

historical intelligibility.⁷³ We instead find coherence and order in diverse ethical and existential meanings across a spectrum of development processes and experiences, requiring a comparative, universal perspective.

Bretton Woods 1944: Capitalist Mutations

We must recover the larger historical meaning of the Nehruvian concept of the “scientific temper” by methodologically foregrounding the organising principle of capitalism and its related institutions, rather than yielding to the pressure of the multi-axial disjuncture of realms. We face the history of capitalism within a specific conjuncture, that is, in its attempt to adapt to radical change and reproduce itself in the wake of the World War I upheaval. Marx believed capitalism to be a necessary historical phase, to be replaced by its opposite in a fairer society. Marx saw contradictions opposing classes in their socioeconomic interactions. Through rearranging social organization to produce a classless society, the contradictions would be resolved. The 1944 Bretton Woods system was designed to prove Marx wrong. Capitalism was not doomed, its delegates argued. It required a single global system, the free flow of capital and goods without exchange controls and government taxes. In July 1944, 700 bankers, representing 44 nations allied against Nazi Germany, met at Bretton Woods in New Hampshire. They planned a financial system to (1) repair world war damages and (2) prevent future conflict. They agreed on the causes of the world wars. Industrialised nations had betrayed the “free trade” principle. They had exploited colonies, as raw materials (for making goods) and captive consumer markets (for selling them). Economic blocs therefore competed for global supremacy, producing conflict. Crisis had hit with the stock market crash (1929) and the Great

⁷³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 99.

Depression (1930s). Imperialist nations, they concluded, had over-relied on colonies for economic strength.⁷⁴

The Bretton Woods system promoted social rights in government safety nets, enabling citizens to make payments when unemployed, providing healthcare for the poor, and state pensions for the elderly and infirm. By alleviating economic hardship, welfare states could prevent popular revolts like the 1917 October Revolution. Reforms also included new political rights in universal adult suffrage: Britain, in 1928 (Representation of the People Act), after lobbying by “suffragettes”; India, in 1950, after political independence. Afro-Americans voting rights were enforced in the USA following the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These experiences pointed to what Piketty has identified as “new norms of collective justice” centred on the “social state”.⁷⁵

The free trade system, later championed emblematically by Ronald Reagan (US President 1981-1989) and Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister 1979-1990), proved economically coercive. Massive subsidies for European farmers under the Common Agricultural Policy, in 1958, made global trading uneven. African economies, shaped by colonialism, required income from food exports to feed populations. Rich countries artificially depressed prices through import taxes, while overproducing at inflated prices. Mountains of butter, lakes of wine, and cheese and grain exceeded what Europe could consume. These were dumped at low prices abroad, driving Third World farmers out of business.⁷⁶ The global division of labour that characterised European empire significantly survived the end of colonialism. The relations of force at work in property relations, combined with other sources of social power (military, political, ideological) at the global level, proved that the Marxian dialectic had indeed retained its theoretical relevance

74 Palmowski, 80.

75 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 313.

76 Christopher Lloyd, *The World. A Pocket History* (London: Independent News, 2009), 6-7.

beyond the efforts of the Bretton Woods experiment to render it obsolete.⁷⁷ This is the conjuncture that we have gradually been defining as the circle of violence and progress.

Creating a conceptual order for the reality of the circle of violence and progress requires identifying a suitable methodology. We have seen that various theoretical strategies have become important in scholarly efforts to explain it: (1) we have seen the major theoretical limits and ethical catastrophes of the sectarian, dogmatic Marxism that eclipsed much of left thought during the 20th century, in what Chandra called “Stalin-Marxism”;⁷⁸ (2) we have seen the grave limits and ethical liabilities in an influential alternative embraced by many former Marxists and left-leaning scholars in the Heideggerian revolt against “modernity”; (3) we have seen how the invisible structures of property and markets can be endowed with meaningful categories and relationships through the sociological tradition centred on civil society that was articulated tentatively in Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* (1929-35), as well as more widely in the new sociology to emerge from the Structuralist Revolution identified in the preceding sections. This latter was a multi-axial understanding of social change, and, in this way, anticipates Mann’s four sources of social power. A pathbreaking expression of the multi-axial tendency combined with a clear material ethics was Sen’s *Development as Freedom* (1999). To understand how the problematic of the circle of violence and progress was initially conceived, we need to step back into the intellectual climate of the 20th century when the Bretton Woods conjuncture dominated debates.

The ground-breaking work in this structuralist methodological stream which laid bare the most basic structure of the circle of violence and progress in a historically and sociologically dynamic way, while also crucially articulating the related ethical questions, was Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* (1944). In fact, Polanyi

77 Piketty, *l'égalité*, 306-308.

78 Chandra, *Making*, xxv.

came closest to identifying a middle way between conceiving social realities reductively as the epiphenomena of a mode of production and the inadequate absence of a centring referential point identifiable with the regime of capital, or a purely multi-axial picture of change in modern societies.⁷⁹ The economist Eloi Laurent has identified Polanyi's work as the critical articulation of the circulatory relation of "public and market forces in a state of existential interdependence".⁸⁰

The final section of this chapter will, firstly, analyse Polanyi's work in a methodological comparison with the influential Heideggerian approach to show that, despite superficial resemblances, we are seeing two fundamentally irreconcilable methodologies: ethically, politically and epistemically. Secondly, we compare *The Great Transformation* to Sen's writings to demonstrate not only the important continuities but also the areas where Sen has significantly advanced the concepts found in Polanyi's pathbreaking work, even as he loses sight somehow of the regime of capital as the central principle in a way that Polanyi did not. It is through Sen that we can transfer the gains of Polanyi's thought to the colonial context in order to retrieve the historical meaning of the "scientific temper" concept in the Nehruvian nation-making experience as part of a transnational conjuncture.

Karl Polanyi and Martin Heidegger: Comparatively Evaluating Opposed Methodologies for Understanding Modernisation

Comparative analysis of *The Great Transformation* (1944) and *Being and Time* (1927) differentiates *sociological* and *ontological* versions of pioneering methodologies for understanding "development". As a term, "development" is a cluster of research and theories that came to refer to national economic growth in

79 Heilbroner, 82-84.

80 Laurent, 17.

the U.S. beginning in the 1940s and linked to Cold War foreign policy concerns. Neither Heidegger nor Polanyi had this discursive coinage in mind, but wrote about the modernisation of societies in a broader equivalent way as criticisms of the process. Clearly, the earliest theoretical articulations of modernisation were in the 18th century Enlightenment concept of “progress” (i.e., in Condorcet), which Heidegger vehemently rejects while Polanyi views as material progress at the cost of destroying the human and the natural worlds. Polanyi called for a type of material progress that would not take a destructive and ultimately fatal toll in an alternative, socialist idea of progress. While Polanyi stands in the sociological tradition of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, Heidegger fiercely rejects sociology as another expression of Enlightenment epistemology over the bounded world of “being” guaranteed in shared meanings and values.

For both, “development” meant change, uprooting and violence. Both valued everydayness, for its “authenticity” (Heidegger), or self-mobilization as collective creation of a “social imaginary” (Polanyi). As a sociologist, Polanyi’s focus on everydayness is what primarily distinguished him from his predecessors, which is why his theories are often mistaken for being complimentary to Heideggerian arguments about “being”. Polanyi, in fact, argued not against “development”, but for a certain type of “development”.

Everydayness

Heidegger and Polanyi opposed excessive quantification of the existential “lifeworlds”, but from opposed methodological positions. Does ethics concern obedience to an original source of cultural authority, or the equal consideration of interests which provides the minimum position for the equality principle?⁸¹ The sociological and ontological approaches are methodologically and ethically antithetical. Everydayness was the subject of

81 Singer, 7-21.

Being and Time, “being as it is initially and for the most part – in its average everydayness”.⁸² Polanyi’s *Great Transformation* rejected the “prejudice” of “restricting the interests of human groups to monetary income”, instead examining everyday life horizons through the structuralist optic of relational *networks*: “neighbors, professional persons, consumers, pedestrians, commuters, sportsmen, hikers, gardeners, patients, mothers, or lovers”.⁸³ Polanyi situated these many everyday moments in a conjunctural system of social relationships. Heidegger’s everyday meaning centred a “cultural paradigm”, Polanyi’s from “social imaginaries” defined by institutional matrices. In Heidegger’s vision, a universalizing modern “worldview” occludes “being”, calculating, objectifying, and all-encompassing. Polanyi equated “development” with diversely arranged institutional matrixes: economies, technologies, state-law, populations, and “social imaginaries”. The comparison distinguishes the recovery of cultural “authenticity” from “liberation” from poverty and oppression, with consequently conflicting ideals of “agency”. They are two of the major 20th century methodological responses to the “implosive aspect to the expansion of capital, as daily life is scanned for possibilities that can be brought within the circuit of accumulation”. We see the “transformation of activities that bring pleasure or use-values into activities that also yield a profit to their organizers and thus become an important ‘interior’ realm into which capital expands”.⁸⁴

Uprooting

Polanyi’s term for “uprooting” is “dis-embeddedness”, Heidegger’s is “fall from being”.

For Heidegger, “being” is reduced to “beings” in an amnesiac

82 Heidegger, *BT*, 14-15.

83 Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 61.

84 Heilbroner, 60

reduction of humans and nature to a scientific *object*. For Polanyi, the *commodification* of human beings and nature constituted a social and existential crisis through “fictional commodities” (land, labour, and capital). Polanyi details the “destruction of the old social tissue”, or “dis-embeddedness”, where “labouring man was homeless in society” and “torn from his roots”.⁸⁵ A sociological “logic of development”, traceable to “the last decade of the eighteenth century”, saw the market commodification of labour, land, and money.⁸⁶ The earlier 16th century Tudor Enclosures defined modern poverty as a historically and sociologically specific problem: “Views on the poor mirrored more and more views on existence as a whole”, concerned with “the possibilities of modern existence”.⁸⁷ However, “poverty was merely the economic aspect of this event”. Here Polanyi anticipated Sen’s “capabilities”. A “lifeworld” underwent “havoc” in the “social environment”, “neighbourhood”, “standing in the social community”, “craft”, those “relations of nature to man” in which “economic existence was formerly embedded”.⁸⁸ The crisis concerns values within a collective reality. Polanyi is concerned sociologically with the conjuncture where ownership over the mode of production creates a new type of power corresponding to a new experience of poverty:

“... wealth can only come into existence when the right of access of all members of society to an independent livelihood no longer prevails, so that control over this access becomes of life-giving importance. The corollary is that wealth cannot exist unless there also exists a condition of scarcity – not insufficiency of resources themselves, but insufficiency of means of access to resources.”⁸⁹

The creation of the labour market in England required a dramatic increase in the state’s repressive powers, as exemplified

85 Polanyi, *GT*, 35, 87.

86 Polanyi, *GT*, 74-81.

87 Polanyi, *GT*, 36, 75, 110.

88 Polanyi, *GT*, 135.

89 Heilbroner, 46.

in the Poor Law. Polanyi is analysing law and institutions. For Heidegger, by contrast, the modern mass “uprooting tendency” that is “everywhere and nowhere” in an ontological impulse rooted in a cultural logic.⁹⁰ It is embodied in “utilizing public transportation”, “information services such as the newspaper”, “not staying with what is nearest”, a “quicker pace”, being “driven about by affairs”, and “indifferent side-by-sideness”.⁹¹ Heidegger sees the scientific worldview as nihilism. The “world itself is passed over [and] replaced by objective presence in the world, by things”.⁹²

For Polanyi, roots have secular and humanist meaning. He invokes “the changelessness of man as a social being” as being the “necessary precondition of the survival of human society.”⁹³ In the circulatory dynamic of development and freedom, *plural autonomy* is central: “the right to nonconformity must be institutionally protected. The individual must be free to follow his conscience without fear . . .”.⁹⁴ The primacy given by Polanyi to the social should not negate the independent action of the individual. For Heidegger, by contrast, roots *unify* a “sent” paradigm: “Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of Being”.⁹⁵ This insistence upon cultural rules to collectively live by has its political corollary in denouncing Liberalism as “the arbitrary play of forces”. Instead, the “essence of man, determined by Being itself, is at home”.⁹⁶ Heidegger’s solution is to superimpose a closed and holistic “cultural paradigm” upon what we have called the *conjunctural*, that is, the circle of violence and progress, with the aim of restoring a community of uniform interests.

90 Heidegger, *BT*, 162, 165.

91 Heidegger, *BT*, 121, 161, 163, 356.

92 Heidegger, *BT*, 121.

93 Polanyi, *GT*, 48.

94 Polanyi, *GT*, 263.

95 Martin Heidegger. *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 242-245.

96 Heidegger, *Writings*, 242-245.

“Lifeworld”

For both the “lifeworld” was a *limit*, investing existential and ethical value in everydayness. This refers to an ancient problematic that we find initially in Aristotle’s writings on “commerce”, which “disturbed him because it offered the prospect of an unlimited accumulation of wealth”.⁹⁷ Aristotle therefore distinguished between “use value” and “exchange value”, the latter of which, “by discovering in all objects—indeed in nearly all activities—an abstract dimension of money equivalences, insinuates a limitlessness into the calculation of wealth that Aristotle was the first to perceive and fear”.⁹⁸ Polanyi saw the threat to the “lifeworld” precisely in this limitless drive for capitalist profit, Heidegger in scientific “representation” that he traced back to ancient Greek thought. Polanyi’s “concreteness” is sociological, differentiating production for use and gain, condemning gain imagined as “boundless and limitless”, divorced from the “concrete social relationships” which “set a limit to that motive”.⁹⁹ The “self-adjusting market” cannot “exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness”.¹⁰⁰ Limiting factors arise from “all points of the sociological compass”. Custom and law, religion and magic restrict “acts of exchange in respect to persons and objects, time and occasion”.¹⁰¹ This is Polanyi’s core thesis in the “double movement”.

Polanyi saw no “salvation” in “a return to rural existence”.¹⁰² He writes: “the restoration of the past is as impossible as the transferring of our troubles to another planet. Instead of eliminating the demonic forces of aggression and conquest, such a futile attempt would

97 Backhouse, 23.

98 Heilbroner, 55-56.

99 Polanyi, *GT*, 56- 57.

100 Polanyi, *GT*, 3.

101 Polanyi, *GT*, 64.

102 Polanyi, *GT*, 175.

actually ensure the survival of those forces".¹⁰³ No pure inside/outside boundary divides modern from traditional, or universal from local. Polanyi, in the Enlightenment tradition, affirms critical demystification of cultural power. Heidegger's "protection" of the "lifeworld" meant defending a "cultural paradigm" against such demystification, because "reason" itself in his view is the source of a loss of value and meaning.¹⁰⁴ He called "reason" the "most stiff-necked adversary of thought".¹⁰⁵ Power defines public meaning in his view, linking identity to established order, emphasizing "dwelling", "what is nearest", the "surrounding world taken care of", inspiring "contemplation that wonders at being".¹⁰⁶ That is, the world should be re-enchanted against the scientific tendency to expose a naked reality bearing no relation to the traditional religious dogmas that provide a framework for daily life. With scientific objectivity, cultural meaning is lost, requiring "explicit retrieve of the question of being", the "question [which] today has been forgotten".¹⁰⁷ *Being and Time* investigates *revivalist* possibilities, a "new beginning".

Heidegger dismantles the "scientific subject" and the "scientific object", undermining sociological demystification of tradition. Truth and belonging collapse where "one mostly does not distinguish oneself", in terms of "certain ways to be".¹⁰⁸ Heidegger rejects the *comparative basis* for Enlightenment cosmopolitanism as the false "opinion" that "understanding the most foreign cultures and 'synthesizing' them with our own may lead to the thorough and first genuine enlightenment".¹⁰⁹ As we saw, the

103 Polanyi, *GT*, 259.

104 Martin Heidegger. *Essais et Conférences* (Domont: Gallimard, 2014), 115.

105 Wolin, *Seduction*, 159.

106 Heidegger, *BT*, 161.

107 Heidegger, *BT*, 1.

108 Heidegger, *BT*, 118.

109 Heidegger, *BT*, 166.

methodological principle of comparison is the germinal moment of the Structuralist Revolution that revolutionised the Enlightenment tradition by conceiving identity in relational rather than ontological terms. It underlined the falsehood of culture as a closed and fixed arrangement. Heidegger revolts against this.

Heidegger's issue is illustrated in Todorov's theory of the "individual". Doubling, for Todorov, is a valuable experience for it permits individuals to see their own and other cultures through the eyes of an outsider, thereby recognising the many things uncritically taken for "natural" or "inevitable" as being in reality "cultural". This insight is traceable to Montesquieu, the founder of modern sociology: learning to see one's own culture through the eyes of others is the ground of cosmopolitan enlightenment, but it leaves the self a liberated vacuum. It is deconstructive, but offers no positive theory of the meaning-producing processes of culture. Todorov believed that this modern conundrum of the self was a price worth paying to live in a multicultural and democratic social order.

Heidegger disagreed. It is what he meant when he wrote that interest in the "most remote and strangest cultures" is only to "veil [modernity's] own groundlessness" in a "past that has become unrecognizable to it". *Being and Time* promotes revivalism involving "the occurrence of the community, of a people". Its political corollary is "reverence for the sole authority that a free existence can have", for which objective knowledge – for instance, Darwinism, emphasising a common humanity deeper than dividing cultural conventions - is a threat.¹¹⁰

We should leave the last word to Todorov in his further reflections on the modern individual. In the Liberal tradition, Todorov argues, only the juridic individual is protected from abuse of social power through the organized rule of law. The individual in a totalitarian society becomes a ghost, having in principle disappeared. This is

110 Heidegger, *BT*, 19, 358, 352, 357.

what happened to the victims of the Nazi regime that Heidegger saw as the ideal manifestation of his philosophy. Above all, Todorov argues, the concentration camp as the defining sign of a totalitarian society isolates every individual within a private nightmare. Todorov describes Camp Lovech in his native Bulgaria in categories echoing the Fantastic. It is defined by the sadistic fantasy world of the gaolers. They let themselves go in the feeling of total power over the life of another, the power to make others suffer and die. They would never behave sadistically in any circumstances outside of the prison. They are ordinary people. Todorov affirms Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil". The essence of the concentration camp system is to take away "personhood". The goaler hands his victim a mirror: "look at yourself for the last time".¹¹¹ The corpses are stacked up in sacks behind the toilets until there are twenty, then the lorry arrives to collect them. Everything is done with the aim of breaking any internal resistance among the prisoners. The only way to survive is to sink into docile silence. The prisoners barely speak among themselves. One occasionally speaks to a wall to remind himself that he can speak. Every trace of autonomy is eliminated.

Materialism: Ontology and Epistemology

Polanyi sees all societies "limited by the material conditions of their existence – this is a common trait of all human life, indeed, of all life, whether religious or nonreligious, material or spiritualist. All types of societies are limited by economic factors". Polanyi similarly spurns Hegelian teleology, or "looking at the past ten thousand years as a prelude to our civilization". Emphasis on the "social origins of human motive" in the "reality of society" links Polanyi to Durkheimian "social" structuralism.¹¹² Polanyi sees "knowledge of society" occurring "through living in an industrial society", within the orbit of a social topography shaped in its

111 Tzvetan Todorov. *L'homme dépaysé* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 58.

112 Polanyi, *GT*, 117-133.

institutions by the logic of capitalism.¹¹³ Heideggerian materialism, meanwhile, trivializes “rational enlightenment”, compared to the “enigma” revealed by existential “mood”.¹¹⁴ Objectivity is shallow compared to the “question of being”, provoked by “uncanniness, primordially thrown being-in-the-world, as not-at-home, the naked ‘that’ in the nothingness of the world”.¹¹⁵ “Being” is what “does not show itself for the most part, something that is *concealed*.” It “constitutes the meaning and ground” of “what for the most part shows itself”.¹¹⁶ In a “moment of vision”, “being is more primordial than any knowing about it”.¹¹⁷ The argument defends *organically* shared cultural experience as a deeper truth than *concocted* scientific objectivity. Heidegger’s “reverence for the sole authority that a free existence can have” means submission to community norms.¹¹⁸

The Great Transformation centres the first “antinomy of development” as the fundamental problematic of a free existence: “[Must] the shifting of industrial civilization onto a new nonmarketing basis [entail] the loss of freedom?”¹¹⁹ That is, how can the necessary role of the state in creating social equality be combined with unlimited political freedom of civil society? This was the fundamental question of the Nehruvian “development” experiment. Similarly, the Ethic of Reconciliation presents a striking synchronicity. *The Great Transformation* centres plural autonomous networks, as in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate. It seeks to “explain” developments in “human institutions”, to “throw light on matters of the present”.¹²⁰ The focus is networking and

113 Polanyi, *GT*, 267-68.

114 Heidegger, *BT*, 128.

115 Heidegger, *BT*, 255.

116 Heidegger, *BT*, 255, 31.

117 Heidegger, *BT*, 311, 264.

118 Polanyi, *BT*, 19, 358, 352, 357.

119 Polanyi, *GT*, 258.

120 Polanyi, *GT*, 4.

public action. Nineteenth-century “trade unions” and “factory laws” were “protective institutions” against the “social destruction wrought by a free labor market”.¹²¹ Polanyi employs “objective reasons” (i.e., causality, historical evidence) to explain “institutional origins” through “symbiotic” linkages and “long-run factors”, “daily issues” shaped into “internationally identical patterns” and “similar alternatives”.¹²²

Heidegger uses “deconstruction” and “phenomenology”, which reject factuality and scientific methodological norms: “We must show that all previous questions and investigations (i.e., anthropology, biology, psychology, all sciences of beings) fail to see the real *philosophical* problem (i.e., the question of being), regardless of their factual productivity”.¹²³ The section of the Left today that embraces Heideggerian methodology, routinely confusing his confrontation with “modernity” for Polanyi’s criticism of capitalism, fail to understand that Heidegger was deeply conservative and a determined adversary of the Left tradition.

Karl Polanyi and Amartya Sen, from “Double Movement” to “Capabilities”: The Sociological “Lifeworld”

The sociological “lifeworld” unifies Polanyi and Sen. The “development” process can be existentially meaningful and ethical, while causally intelligible. *The Great Transformation* explains how flawed developmental dynamism sowed transnational crisis, from the late 18th to World War I. Sen’s *Development as Freedom* (2000) reconceptualizes how diverse 20th century global development processes have *variable meanings*. Polanyi integrates *structuralism* and *humanism*: “Institutions are embodiments of human meaning and purpose”.¹²⁴ That is, Sen uses a concept of the

121 Polanyi, *GT*, 81.

122 Polanyi, *GT*, 154, 22, 29, 32, 5.

123 Heidegger, *BT*, 43.

124 Polanyi, *GT*, 262.

lifeworld. Opposing the “search for perfection”, Sen also *compares* “institutional arrangements” based on “societies that already exist or could conceivably emerge”.¹²⁵ As we have seen, the type of utopian perfectionism that characterised early Bolshevik ideology constitutes the negation of the value of the everyday lifeworld. It is sacrificed for a future aim, known only by the ruling party. Their humanism employs *comparative* not *transcendental* principles, and *relational* over *essentialist* identity, that is, it partakes of the structural revolution.

We need to compare Sen’s “capabilities” and Polanyi’s “double movement” as complimentary theories of social action that remap the fact/value boundary, while retaining the concept of objectivity. A failure of knowledge has produced failed institutions. Polanyi and Sen prioritize the many-sided and qualitative *lifeworlds* over quantitative increase in economic value. But criticisms focus on the core dynamic of capitalism. Sen cites the “growth of gross national product” and the “rise in personal incomes” as “means to expanding freedoms enjoyed by members of the society”. Sen’s concept of “freedom” is not strictly legalistic. These “freedoms”, beyond political and social *rights*, include also *existential considerations* of “well-being” (i.e., personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, contingent circumstances, group expectation and self-respect).¹²⁶ That is why it must be qualified as a theory of the lifeworld, and not merely a legalistic concept of civil society. Sen’s concern is the “lives that people actually lead”, including such abilities as “appearing in public without shame” (i.e., the wider empathetic and trust-based dynamic that makes any social movement, including nationalism, possible).¹²⁷ Sen observes: “African Americans are very many times richer in income terms than the people of China or Kerala”, but have a “lower chance of reaching advanced ages”.¹²⁸

125 Sen, *Justice*, 10-11.

126 Sen, *DF*, 70-71.

127 Sen, *DF*, 72-73.

128 Sen, *DF*, 21.

The explanation requires *comparative* examination of experiences in the sociological “lifeworlds”.

Methodologically, *The Great Transformation* portrays the “dynamics of progress” *dialectically*, as the “march of industrial civilization”, “a vast movement of economic improvement”, or “the revolutionary transformation to which the peoples of the planet were subject”. It suggests “a prosperity of giant proportions ... destined to become a new form of life”. Polanyi invokes the *dialectical* interaction of increased economic value and the values of the “dis-embedded” populations, from Europe to the “semi-colonial regions of the world, including the decaying empires of Islam”. What should be clear in this dialectical description is that Polanyi is invoking a circle of violence and progress of transnational scope. A comparative optic explains “the building of railways in the Balkans, in Anatolia, Syria, Persia, Egypt, Morocco, and China [as] a story of endurance and of breath-taking turns reminiscent of a similar feat on the North American Continent.”

It is also a theory of social action, because the circle of violence and progress produces a collective response from those populations subjected to its logic. The “social fabric” assaulted by the “market economy” has produced a transnational “countermove” at “innumerable disconnected points” without any “traceable links” or “ideological conformity”. Because of this “great variety of people”, without any “theoretical or intellectual preconceptions”, no *ontology* can explain it. There is a “depth and independence of underlying causes”, a *conjuncture*, requiring examination of multiple “lifeworlds”.¹²⁹ The “countermovement” is universal but manifests itself in multiple and contradictory path.

The “lifeworld” is methodologically central: “even where money values were involved, they were secondary to other interests. Almost invariably professional status, safety and security, the forms of a man’s life, the breadth of his existence, the stability

129 Polanyi, *GT*, 65,11, 89, 15, 156-57.

of his environment were in question”.¹³⁰ Markets, democracy, or innovation alone do not explain growth – women’s emancipation, for example, is one major force of positive economic effect. Polanyi suggests a circulatory relation between freedom and widespread prosperity. Only many-sided “lifeworld” analysis can *objectively* grasp the *existential* or *ethical* significance of “development” processes, which are not a repetitive, expansive, “natural” process (i.e., as Liberalism argued).

Polanyi identifies the core “lifeworld” dynamic in variations on the labour process: “the organization of labour is only another word for the *forms of life* of the common people”.¹³¹ Collective power has multiple modes, in “feudal forms of life” and “market forms of life”. Sen similarly defines the “lifeworld” through labour:

“One of the biggest changes in the process of development in many economies involves the replacement of bonded labour and forced work, which characterizes many traditional agricultures, with a system of free labour contract and unrestrained physical movement”.¹³²

The market, having revolutionized social life beyond ‘cosmically’ fixed occupational categories, requires shaping by state-civil society interaction to the ends of social justice and earthly survival. A qualified dialectical methodology can theoretically capture the “incomprehensible fact that poverty seemed to go with plenty”, one of the “baffling paradoxes with which industrial society was to confront modern man” and “one of the deepest crises in man’s history”.¹³³ Sen similarly sees “poverty is a deprivation of capabilities”. Although the “usefulness of wealth lies in the things that it allows us to do”, millions “across the world suffer from varieties of unfreedom”: famines, undernutrition, the lack of health care and sanitary arrangements, the absence of education and

130 Polanyi, *GT*, 39, 161.

131 Polanyi, *GT*, 79.

132 Sen, *DF*, 28.

133 Polanyi, *GT*, 89, 4.

employment, economic and social security, and denial of human rights, inflict vulnerability and ultimately threaten freedom to survive.¹³⁴

Polanyi cites “the parallel between the devastations caused by the ultimately beneficial enclosures and those resulting from the Industrial Revolution”, or “improvement on the grandest scale which wrought unprecedented havoc with the habitation of the common people”. This is Polanyi’s “double movement”, which redefines the logic of capitalism, factoring in the human and natural response to violent extraction for accumulation purposes:

“...for a century the dynamics of modern society was governed by a double movement: the market expanded continuously, but this movement was met by a countermovement”.¹³⁵

The “countermovement” was *self-protective action* by populations: “a self-adjusting market” could “not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness”.¹³⁶

Polanyi’s “double movement” and Sen’s “capabilities” intersect. The self-protective “countermovement”, in mobilization and institution-building, transforms through collective empowerment into Sen’s “capabilities”. Sen writes of vulnerability as unfreedom: “a great many people have little access to health care, to sanitary arrangements and clean water, and spend their lives fighting unnecessary morbidity, often succumbing to premature mortality.” Richer countries also have “disadvantaged people who lack basic opportunities, health care, functional education, or gainful employment”. Everywhere, “inequality between men and women afflicts – and sometimes prematurely ends – the lives of millions of

134 Sen, *DF*, 14-15.

135 Polanyi, *GT*, 36, 41, 136.

136 Polanyi, *GT*, 3.

women”.¹³⁷ The logic of the “double movement” involves collective self-empowerment through institution-building, that is, its gains require crystallisation in power and law. These observations are exemplified in the gains of women’s rights or civil rights movements. A “capability” permits “various things a person may value doing or being”, and enables them to “choose a life one has reason to value”.¹³⁸

The “double movement” simultaneously implies a counter-revolutionary force at work, seeking to protect power relations established by vested interests. The post-Napoleonic War Holy Alliance, for example, in seeking the “denationalization of Europe”, endeavoured to dismantle the newly empowered “national” networks based on collective mobilization.¹³⁹ The primacy of nation and class as actors in modern societies are manifested in trade unionism: “the function of trade unions becomes morally and culturally vital to the maintenance of minimum standards for the majority of people”. In self-protective empowerment, populations obtain a greater share of economic value produced by development: “the more the labour market contorted the lives of the workers, the more insistently they clamoured for the vote”. Thus, “universal suffrage made the state the organ of the ruling million – the identical million who, in the economic realm, had often to carry in bitterness the burden of the ruled”.¹⁴⁰

In Polanyi’s vision, timing replaces historicism. In specific cases, “the rate of progress might have been ruinous, and have turned the process into a degenerative instead of constructive event”. This defines Polanyi’s “complex society”.¹⁴¹ At the “root of the dilemma” of the “complex society” is the “meaning of freedom”

137 Sen, *DF*, 15.

138 Sen, *DF*, 74-75.

139 Polanyi, *GT*, 7.

140 Polanyi, *GT*, 239, 233, 216.

141 Polanyi, *GT*, 39, 89.

in modern societies defined by differing interests and values.¹⁴² Sen comparably remarks on justice, “it would be a mistake to lock prematurely into one specific system”, “one linear order” or “unique blueprint”, due to “competing claims of different principles and criteria”.¹⁴³ Negotiating conflicting freedoms and structural antinomies characterised the Nehru period in the logic of the national movement over that of the top-down national programme, thereby providing a concrete historical instance of the theories elaborated by Polanyi and Sen.

Mann argued that society is not a “whole”, but a “non-systemic” process between “historically given institutions” (i.e., structures) and “emergent interstitial forces” (i.e., conjuncture).¹⁴⁴ What Mann calls “the mess that constitutes real human societies” is what Polanyi and Sen invoke as the “lifeworld”.¹⁴⁵ It is composed of the following three elements:

- (1) It is identified as a concept specific to the historical and sociological conditions subject to the logic of capitalism. Polanyi writes that “... society as a whole remains invisible”, because of market-driven sectoral divisions of producers and consumers. Structural violence (unemployment, destitution, etc.) is ideologically mystified in demagogic political opportunism (i.e., organicism).¹⁴⁶
- (2) The logic of the theory necessarily entails ethical individualism: “Every move toward integration in society should thus be accompanied by an increase of freedom; moves toward planning should comprise the strengthening of the rights of the individual in society”. Sen similarly defines development as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy”. Polanyi emphasises

142 Polanyi, *GT*, 262, 266.

143 Sen, *DF*, 286-87.

144 Mann, *vol. 2*, 21.

145 Mann, *vol. 2*, 2.

146 Polanyi, *GT*, 262.

political form: “No mere declaration of rights can suffice: institutions are required to make the rights effective”. But, as we have seen, no institutional template can be a substitute for the lifeworld. The “complex society”, to be “both just and free”, requires combined freedom and force (i.e., state power and law to abolish feudalism).¹⁴⁷

- (3) It is a theory of growth over final ends: “Man becomes mature and able to exist as a human being in a complex society”.¹⁴⁸

We have come nearer to retrieving the core elements of the “scientific temper” concept. These include: (1) the communicative principle: Polanyi argues for the “superlative importance to free institutions of discussion and decision”, which means no institutional is sufficient without an open and dialogic process to allow it to grow with the experience of time and change.¹⁴⁹ The fundamental condition is organised power sharing grounded in the rule of law. (2) This has its logical implication in the participatory principle. Sen sees positive the value of institutional arrangements only guaranteed “through the liberty to participate in social choice”.¹⁵⁰ A circulatory dynamic unifies well-functioning institutions and free public participation, with central importance in the communicative principle among a public capable of distinguishing scientific fact from the manipulative fictions of demagogy. This implies the centrality of mass education in any successful linkage of development and freedom.

Circulatory dynamics link mass movements, “hegemonic activists”, and post-independence “developing” regimes. Transformations in public meanings and values are circulatory; “lifeworld” and “state” mutually configure one another, ideologically, economically, and politically, in circulatory rootings.

147 Polanyi, *GT*, 264, 264, 3, 265.

148 Polanyi, *GT*, 252.

149 Polanyi, *GT*, 252.

150 Sen, *DF*, 5.

To argue the state is illegitimate until *one* with the “lifeworld” is organicism, the utopia of uniform public interests. Only military power can secure this superficial appearance under the dictatorship of a one-party state. Intersecting capitalist-national transitions correspond to Karl Polanyi’s self-protective “double movement”; state-democratic transitions correspond to Sen’s institutional and individual “capabilities” as a circulatory dynamic. This affirms the circulatory relation between evolving institutional and individual capabilities in a large and poor multi-party democracy emerging from colonialism.

PART I

A History of the Scientific Temper
Debate: “Development” and
“Lifeworld” as Transnational
Problems

CHAPTER 3

Al-Afghani and Egypt's Urabi Revolution (1879-1882)

Methodology: Instantiations

Chapters three to six provide closer details of “instantiation”, examinations of the circulatory role of “hegemonic activists”, the formation of social movements, and the relation of those movements to new states in post-independence (“anticipations, projections, and plans”).¹ The methodology relies upon a synthesis of the prior works of Ismail Fajrie Alatas and James A. Robinson. The chapters three and four are focused respectively on two seminal revolutions that shed light on the meaning of the “scientific temper” as a political problem in 20th century postcolonial nation-making: the Urabi Revolution (1879-1882) in Egypt, and the Swadeshi Movement (1903-1908) in India. Chapters five and six deal with the “articulatory labour” of adapting deep traditional structures – in this case, the Indian caste system and Indian Islam - to new challenges in the modern context of anti-colonial struggle and the nation-making processes in the independence period.

The circulatory dynamics will be investigated through a comparative methodology. This follows the structural revolution. We must transcend the classical opposition between general (abstract) and individual (concrete). It is not the individual thing

1 Sur, 24.

or action which is examined, but rather the individuation of that individual thing in relation to other individual things. The focus is therefore not identity as an essence, but as multiple relational processes. This modern concept of “instantiation” is originally indebted to Charles Peirce, the founder of American Pragmatism. In the view of “mind” targeted by Peirce’s critique, value and meaning come from the eternal. A system of superstition, Peirce contends, projects the uncertainties we feel over the mundane passage of time onto an imaginary second world (i.e., Plato’s Theory of Forms, monotheist Theodicy, Kantian noumena, Hegelian historicism). Putnam defines this methodological tendency as inflationary ontology, a totalizing truth and identity concept built on eternal presence or absence:

“... when one thinks that one has explained *why* some persons, traits of character, activities, and states of affairs are good by postulating something ‘non-natural’, something mysterious and sublime standing invisibly behind the goodness of persons, actions, situations, etc., one thereby commits oneself to a form of monism in the sense that one reduces (or imagines one has reduced) all ethical phenomena, all ethical problems, all ethical questions, indeed all value problems, to just one issue, the presence or absence of this single super-thing God”.²

Peirce’s concept of *signs* has a secularising significance in modern epistemology. The mind is outside, in the public space, not concealed inside: “just as we say that a body is in motion, and not that motion is in a body we ought to say that we are in thought, and not that thoughts are in us”.³ We exist in a public space structured by dynamic daily interaction with anterior thought, creating the future through the present in moral experience as lived. The continuous public transformation in thought transpires within a specific problem space, or argumentative context. The event is

2 Hilary Putnam. *Ethics without Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 30.

3 Charles Sanders Peirce. *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 71.

defined by a horizon of identifiable stakes, occurring in relation to what is essential to a changing problem space, and thereby obtaining in mobilizing momentum as the source of new social movements. This essentially pragmatist methodology has significance for our understanding of meaning and value.

Usages of “Modernity”: Napoleonic Colonisation of Egypt

Dictatorship can be established with democratic support. This is what Napoleon proved. The French Revolution had destroyed all traditions which had provided some type of checks and balances on the relentless expansion of state power. The revolution did not therefore deviate into terror in a moment of excess. The seed of terror was germinal from the beginning, in a concept of national sovereignty refusing to recognise the legitimacy of conflicting interests within the national community. This is essentially the revisionist view of the French Revolution in the work of François Furet.⁴ It was a pattern that echoed abroad in the Napoleonic empire-building adventures. The colonisation of Egypt was geopolitical. Napoleon persuaded the Directory that in order to defeat the English at sea, France would require colonies, of which Egypt would form a principal strategic asset as the passage to India. The French pattern of political vacuum echoed in Egypt, but it was no simple impact-response where European “modernity” was reproduced in non-European contexts. We require a circulatory framework, as the previous chapter argued, to understand how “modernity” occurred in non-Western historical contexts.

By some accounts, Egyptian “modernity” is constructed as only a footnote to French and British “modernity”. It is an inferior copy. This is so in the far-right scholar and Africa specialist Bernard Lugan, who writes:

4 François Furet. *Penser la Révolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 90.

“In Egypt, the evolution towards a nation-state was precipitated by the Napoleonic expedition which opened the country up to modernity. Its heritage was subsequently harvested by Muhammad Ali who made Egypt a rival power to the Ottoman empire. Then, at the end of the 19th century, the failure of modernisation had the consequence of uncontrollable indebtedness for Egypt, resulting in the country being placed under a European yoke.”⁵

Lugan certainly never unpacks the concept “modernity”, taking it for something self-evident. We can guess what the elements of said “modernity” might be from the list of achievements celebrated as the legacy of the Napoleonic empire in Egypt.⁶ Meanwhile, the Mohammad Ali period is described in terms of its predatory military activities, while passing over its numerous modernisation achievements in silence. The subtext to Lugan’s narrative is: the “birth of modern Egypt” had nothing to do with the Egyptians. The Urabi Revolution goes unnamed. It is briefly described only as a chaotic and impulsive outburst, before being neatly suppressed and “Egyptian finances re-established” by Europeans. Egyptians are only a nuisance, an underlying chaotic force in the orderly unfolding of European plans.⁷ Ultimately, Lugan explains, Egyptian “modernity” fails because of indebtedness to Britain and France, which, we are meant to believe, is entirely Egypt’s own doing. Full colonisation was then a matter of course. In sum, Lugan’s writings on Egyptian history precisely correspond to the charge made by Mitchell and others that European empire embodies “order” while Egypt exists as a seething “chaos”. The essence of “modernity” is that non-European populations have no role in creating it, Lugan subtly argues, it is the intrepid work of European colonisers and participation by indigenous populations constitutes nothing but an obstruction to its proper realisation. The critique made by

5 Bernard Lugan. *Histoire de l’Egypte. Des origines à nos jours* (Monaco : Rocher, 2021), 107.

6 Lugan, 116-118.

7 Lugan, 130-133.

Mitchell and others in this case perfectly hits the target, but this does not prove the ontological thesis which forms the deeper part of Mitchell's argument.

This is so because this example of an uncritical usage of the term "modernity" in writers like Lugan, who unapologetically champion European empire, does not typify every usage. Pankaj Mishra also uses the term "modernity" without explicitly defining it. As with Lugan, we have to read carefully to understand the meaning. Following Mishra's unexplained usage of the term, his subsequent narrative on Egypt reveals an entirely different usage. In fact, the meaning that Mishra tacitly attributes to "modernity" is nearly the polar opposite of Lugan's. Mishra writes: "Islam was as much a universalising ideology as Western modernity is now, and it successfully shaped distinctive political systems, economies and cultural attitudes across a wide geographical region: the fourteenth-century Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta had as little trouble getting jobs at imperial courts in India or in West Africa as a Harvard MBA would in Hong Kong or Cape Town today".⁸ By this account, "modernity", much like "Islam", is a system of linkages and flows, its employment opportunities not centred on imperial courts but supranational companies. "Modernity", in Mishra's usage, can be recognized as another word for capitalism, in which a "network of commodity flows cuts through the boundaries of national sovereignty to form a system".⁹

Superficially, the narrative presented by Mishra is not altogether dissimilar to that of Lugan. Mishra too notes that "France needed colonies in order to prosper ... a presence in Egypt would not only compensate the French for their loss of territory in North America, it could also pose a serious challenge to the British East India Company".¹⁰ The important differences are two-fold. Firstly, Lugan conceives "modernity" not as the capitalist system but a

8 Mishra, 19.

9 Heilbroner, 94.

10 Mishra, 15.

mythic idealisation that we might call Western civilization, the unique creation of Western culture. This explains why “modernity” must only be the creation of Europe, to be subsequently transposed to different non-Western contexts, a gift whose value overrides any possible ethical issues associated with violent conquest. Secondly, and relatedly, Mishra’s narrative frames non-Western voices and actors in the modernisation process. He shows how modern history has been experienced by the majority of the world’s population. Mishra describes modernisation processes as both geopolitical and imaginary, nations and classes as new collective actors. In sum, Mishra employs a multi-dimensional sociological methodology, a space of ethics and change in everyday life, rather than the frigid cultural arrogance that passes for a historical methodology in Lugan, and which in its celebration of naked power is emphatically devoid of any ethics whatsoever. Unlike Mishra, Lugan is scarcely likely to give importance to the invasion of the al-Azhar Mosque by French troops, who, having “tethered their horses to the prayer niches”, then proceeded to “trample the Korans under their boots, drink wine, and urinate on the floor”.¹¹

However, we should call attention to a feature of how Mishra uses the terms “modernity” and “Islam” as twin examples of a “universalising ideology”. He writes:

“The word ‘Islam’, describing the range of Muslim beliefs and practices across the world, was not used before the nineteenth century. But few Muslims over the centuries anywhere doubted that they would have belonged to both a collective and individual way of life, an intense solidarity based on certain shared values, beliefs and traditions. To be a good Muslim was to belong to a community of upholders of the moral and social order.”¹²

“Modernity” is certainly a lived experience with self-conscious cultural attributes prior to being labelled with a precise term, much

11 Mishra, 17.

12 Mishra, 18.

as Mishra says of “Islam”. Mishra’s description, however, of “the *umma* as a universal community of Muslims living under the symbolic authority of the *khalifa* (caliph)” is far more romantic than sociologically rigorous in its methodology. At worst, it tends to a monolithic myth of Islam. As a counterexample, consider the innovative sociological methodology in *What Is Religious Authority? cultivating Islamic communities in Indonesia* by Ismail Fajrie Alatas.

Alatas: Methodology for Conceptualising Authority

Alatas’ monograph deals with the transregional development of religious authority in Islamic contexts, through the successful or unsuccessful formation of diverse forms of community (*Jama’at*), from Sufi orders to madrasas, to – at the limits of the book’s theoretical imagination – caliphates, jihadi networks and various types of modern states. To understand the logic of these encounters, Alatas formulates the basic question: What is religious authority in the Islamic context? More specifically: What can be regarded as *sunna*, and who can articulate it? To trace how this logic of community formation works, Alatas closely examines the diverse labors of cultivating communities that can serve as sites for the transmission and social realization of Prophetic teachings. Actors articulate specific and frequently contending visions of the *sunna*, or the normative teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, his words, actions, and intimate habits. The Qur’an does not provide specifics on every facet of everyday life, referring Muslims to the Prophet as an exemplary model where it is necessary to fill these many gaps. However, no objective contemporary account of the Prophet’s biography exists, and the many narratives of the Prophet’s life derive from geographically, historically and culturally diverse sources.

At the broadest level, therefore, Alatas’ book provides a polyphonic story of how the sunna becomes rooted in and modulated by distinct sociocultural realities. This occurs through

a process of translation, mobilization, collaboration, competition and conflict. The argument emphasises how these labors occur grounded in a present which modulates the past in the attempt to find out what is essential to Islam for this present and future, and do not concern the project of claiming a unique religious authenticity - except in limited ideological guises which break with the norm (i.e., Salafi missions to “purify” a “universal Islam” of all local cultural accretions). Alatas accordingly constructs a sociological, rather than an ontological, theory of the formation of religious authority in Islamic contexts. This is a highly interesting, important and original argument, the theoretical implications of which can prove path breaking in scholarly writings on Islamic society and politics. Alatas’ theory on the formation of religious authority in Islamic communities has deeply pluralistic implications. His study breaks with standard methodologies that rely on sometimes crude dichotomies that obscure the real complexity of how power works at the everyday level in community formation based on claims to religious authority in Islamic contexts. If we seek to understand how authority manifests itself in diverse contexts of “modernity”, we require a similar methodology.

We will examine the case of al-Afghani to understand how a modern conception of authority emerged within the context of Egypt’s Urabi Revolution. For this purpose, we look more closely at Alatas’ methodology of constructing authority in Islamic contexts, to see how Afghani constructed a modernist and secularised paradigm of authority for social revolutionary purposes while drawing from Islamic conceptual resources. Alatas builds his argument on several main theses, which follow logically from one to the other. These include: (1) the thesis of “temporal estrangement” as an alternative to “discursive tradition”, which will be examined more closely in the following paragraph as the basis for the other theses of the work; (2) the thesis of “articulatory labor”, as an alternative to the purely textual or legalistic models of authority identifiable with Salafi (and Orientalist) projects aimed at “recovering” and

purifying “universal” Islam of “local” cultural accretions, and as an alternative to static Weberian theories of “charisma” and “routinisation”; (3) from the conjoined theories of “temporal estrangement” and “articulatory labor”, Alatas differentiates the *umma* from *Jama'a*, arguing for the methodological priority of *Jama'a* – a sociological rather than metaphysical concept - on the grounds that Islam is a “concrete universality” characterised by widely diverse traditions of transmitting *sunna* that are ceaselessly changing, being maintained, becoming contested, and perishing; (4) There are two predominant conceptions of Islamic authority, the juristic or textual source, implying a universal paradigmatic legal tradition (*sharia*), and the older, essentially Sufistic notion of exemplar (*qudwā*) which involves a master who is connected to the Prophet, has assimilated his characteristics, and actively transmits his teachings; (4) the issue of orthodoxy and consensus in the matter of religious authority in Islam, which is in turn connected to the issue of geographic, historical and cultural context-specificity in the formation of religious authority in Islam. Alatas compellingly argues that, under close sociological scrutiny, assumptions about the “authenticity” of the Islam rooted in the Arabian Peninsula - and the “derivative” status of Islam in countries like Indonesia, Iran or Albania - are false, based only on unexamined prejudice, popular myth and certain modern ideologies responding to a political crisis in Islamic countries; (5) ultimately, Alatas draws together these theses to affirm a pragmatic methodology in the study of religious authority.¹³

The thesis of “temporal estrangement” as an alternative to “discursive tradition” begins from an examination of Talal Asad’s pathbreaking argument about an anthropological methodology for Islam. Asad argued for a “discursive tradition”, in which scriptures inform changing forms of social practice. Asad asked: how do Muslims draw on textual traditions to inform social practices, in

13 Ismail Fajrie Alatas. *What Is Religious Authority? cultivating Islamic communities in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2021), 1-35.

the positive construction of an authoritative tradition of religious community? For Asad, Islam is a “millennium-old discursive tradition – and, in interpreting it, [Muslims] inevitably disagree with one another – [yet it] marks them off from Arab nationalists with their Western-derived discourse”.¹⁴ The categories of authenticity-inauthenticity remain the fundamental methodological device. Alatas departs from a different problematic: he begins from the premise of a *vanished* foundational past, as opposed to existing foundational texts. The open space of the vanished past is a source of inexorable pluralism, and, Alatas argues, the reason why Islam has had the infinite flexibility to become a world religion that survives through radical historical changes. Alatas therefore calls religious authority in Islamic contexts a “concrete universality”. This is, of course, the polar opposite of the fundamentalist view that the “universal” strength of Islam is in the timelessness and immutability of its message as the fixed word of God, a clear system of instructions requiring unfaltering obedience by every believer.¹⁵ Alatas’ argument dismantles the monolithic myth of Islam. The sociological methodology proposed by Alatas for understanding the construction of religious authority in Islamic contexts can just as well apply to understanding how “modernity” is formed in diverse cultural and social contexts, in order to be done with the myth of a monolithic “modernity” spread from Europe to the rest of the world in a crude impact-response dynamic. This is, of course, the colonial view of modernity, exemplified by Lugan, and doubled in the Heideggerian-postmodernist view of modernity as a holistic cultural entity.

14 Talal Asad. *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 198.

15 Alatas, 30.

The Circulatory Thesis: State Structure and National Movements

As a methodological alternative to this crude notion of “modernity”, we require the Circulatory Thesis. In the European context, for example, Jeffrey Herbst argued that multiple distinctive dynamics interact catalytically within a conjuncture to produce a sequence of events.¹⁶ Herbst argued that: (1) the high population density of early modern Europe made land scarce and therefore valuable to control; (2) technological change in the methods of warfare drew states into an inescapable arms race/cycle of violent conflict; (3) such warfare is costly, making early modern states reliant for survival on resources; (4) to get money for wars, kings had to build bureaucracies, gather information, map territories and populations; (5) the building of such institutions inadvertently created power sharing arrangements, leading to concessions and changes in the institutional distribution of power. This is the background for the 1688 Glorious Revolution as the archetypal transition in modern power relations to a “nation-state”, rather than high ideals of “freedom” associated with the unique virtues of a mythologised “Western civilization”. This is a non-teleological and sociological interpretation of historical change, indebted to the structural revolution. The circulatory thesis, in this example, sees five mutually reinforcing factors that produced a catalytic pattern across time.

By Herbst’s account, a state is meant to provide certain public goods in society: law and order, defence, contract enforcement and infrastructure. The reality diverges from the ideal. Herbst belongs to the sociological tradition of Weber and Charles Tilly. Nation-states are not just borders and citizens with national identities, but bureaucracies, fiscal systems and representative institutions (i.e., parliaments). Herbst proceeds to argue that this process failed to happen in the African context, whether in the pre-colonial,

16 Jeffrey Herbst. *States and power in Africa: comparative lessons in authority and control* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13.

colonial, or post-colonial periods. He attributes this difference to two core elements: lack of external threats, and low population density. Unlike in Europe, land was not and is not scarce in Africa. Instead, labour was scarce. Therefore, states did not fight over land, but population. This would explain why property rights in people (slavery) were well defined, but those in land were not (most land in Africa was and is held communally).

James A. Robinson's critique of Herbst (and elsewhere with his colleague Acemoglu) provides a devastating alternative explanation, that nevertheless retains a Circulatory methodology in the concept of path dependency.¹⁷ Robinson advanced two points, the first of which questions the assumptions underpinning Herbst's thesis, the second of which proposes an alternative historical trajectory for understanding the logic of the post-colonial African state. Herbst's thesis is that states are connected to population density. In Europe, Robinson writes, early states indeed emerged in the most populous places. In the pre-1415 Americas, too, the highest density of population corresponded to the most developed state institutions. It is also true in Africa and Asia. Yet, today, the countries with the most effective and well-developed states are the "neo-Europes" (Canada, Australia, USA and New Zealand). These historically had very low population density. Meanwhile, among former European colonies, an inverse relationship exists between population density in 1500 and per-capita GDP in 1995. Herbst's direct and unproblematic causal relationship between state and population density therefore does not fit the evidence, or only in a very partial way.

We come to the second point. Robinson therefore argues that the deeper explanation for state formation patterns in modern Africa exists in the nature of colonial conquest and institution-building. He shifts the causal explanation to "extractive institutions". We must take into account the Atlantic slave trade from the early 17th century as the shaping institutional influence on the African

17 James A. Robinson. *States and Power in Africa* by Jeffrey I. Herbst: A Review Essay. *Journal of Economic Literature* Vol. XL (June 2002), 510–519.

institution building process. Slavery and the arms trade functioned together in tandem, shaping a certain type of state legacy in the African context: "Most slaves who were shipped to America were war captives subsequently transported to the coast. The increase in warfare was fuelled by huge imports of guns and ammunition, which the Europeans exchanged for slaves. By 1730 about 180,000 guns were being imported every year just along the west African coast, and between 1750 and the early nineteenth century, the British alone sold between 283,000 and 394,000 guns a year". These conditions provide the context for the population trajectories that Herbst takes as a point of departure, because it was in the very nature of this state formation process to diminish the density of populations through enslaving and selling its members within the logic of capitalist business life. Robinson writes:

"All this warfare and conflict not only caused major loss of life and human suffering but also put in motion a particular path of institutional development in Africa [...] The slave trade initiated two adverse political processes. First, many polities initially became more absolutist, organized around a single objective: to enslave and sell others to European slavers. Second, as a consequence but, paradoxically, in opposition to the first process, warring and slaving ultimately destroyed whatever order and legitimate state authority existed in sub-Saharan Africa."¹⁸

Robinson therefore shifts the site of the core structural element from Herbst's population thesis to the chattel slavery institution conjoined with the logic of global capitalism, for it was this that explains the population phenomenon in the first place: "Probably the most obvious impact of this massive extraction of human beings was demographic", which likely cut the population rate in half by the mid-19th century, also taking account of "millions likely killed by continual warfare aimed at capturing slaves".¹⁹ Secondly, Robinson identifies the conjunctural effects of the structural core in the chattel slavery institution, as it reshaped every aspect of

18 Acemoglu/Robinson, 253.

19 Acemoglu/Robinson, 255.

African societies: “the law became a tool of enslavement [where] no matter what crime you committed, the penalty was slavery”; “institutions, even religious ones, became perverted by the desire to capture and sell slaves”; and the “slave trade disrupted family and marriage structures”.²⁰ The connection between warfare and slave supply indeed produced a military revolution in state power in the sub-Saharan African context.

We will use Alatas’ methodology of “articulatory labour” to analyse the emergence of social movements in civil society, combined with Robinson’s circulatory approach to understanding the logic of nation-state formation, in order to analyse the evidence in the following chapters. That is, the circulatory relation between state structures and national movements in the colonial context can explain how institutions evolve through path dependency to display distinctive characteristics and behaviour.

Background: Muhammed Ali, Military Power and Nahda

An Ottoman subject of Greek Macedonian origin, Muhammad Ali (1805-48) was sent to Egypt as part of an Albanian regiment by the Sultan in a bid to regain authority. Muhammad Ali manoeuvred his way to power through the disorder left behind by the Napoleonic vacuum, which had left Egypt between an independent state and an Ottoman province. Muhammad Ali forced recognition of his viceroyalty of Egypt from the Sultan, and in 1805 he was named Wāli (viceroy) of Egypt and gained the rank of Pasha.

Armies of slaves established during the Abbasid era, Mamluk generals had used their power under the Ayyubid sultanate to establish a dynasty that ruled Egypt and Syria from 1250 to 1517. With the Ottoman defeat of the Mamluks in 1516-17, Egypt reverted to a province governed from Constantinople, exploited as a source of taxation for the imperial government and a base for foreign military expansion. Ottoman policy provided a stable government

20 Acemoglu/Robinson, 253-255.

which maintained high level Egyptian agricultural productivity and promoted the transit trade. Ottoman policy perpetuated the former Mamluk elite, who collaborated with the Ottoman government while defying it and ultimately dominating it. The Mamluks, by the early 18th century, had emerged as the supreme power in Egyptian politics. The Ottomans sought to eradicate Mamluk domination by sending an army to Egypt in 1786. A Mamluk ruling coalition under Murād Bey and Ibrāhīm Bey nevertheless lasted until Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798.

Renegade Ottoman soldier Muhammad Ali, upon gaining power over Egypt, violently pursued a military centred “modernisation” mode, consolidating dictatorial power in a poor Ottoman province. By 1810, he had overrun Egypt, multiplying factories, administration, and armaments, the Napoleonic vacuum begetting institutional proliferation. Mishra places these rapid modernisation achievements within their structural context, that is, the deeper features of Egyptian historical experience at the time:

“Secluded from the disruptive advances of the West, and a relative cultural backwater compared to Mughal India or Persia, Egypt had been jolted into history by Napoleon’s invasion in 1798. It had to modernise, but so much of what had been available to Europe in its modernisation – the long building-up of scientific knowledge, technical skills, intellectual and political freedom – was lacking in Egypt. The result was greater economic and political dependence on the West, more efficient despotism, and increasingly frustrated and resentful upwardly mobile Egyptians.”²¹

The conjunctural frame was the self-protective “counter-movement”, identified by Polanyi, responding to the global division of labour being established by European colonisation. “Sycophantic before Europeans”, Muhammad Ali sent the Ramses II obelisk to the Place de la Concorde, while being “ruthless to his Egyptian subjects”, confiscating old feudal grandee property, stripping Islamic institutional landholdings, and forcing peasants

21 Mishra, 73.

to produce the single cash crop, cotton, for European factories.²² Muhammad Ali's goal was to "build a formidable military and consolidate his own dictatorial power".²³ By introducing new crops with high cash returns, Muhammad Ali became, by 1840, the principal cotton exporter to Britain and France. Muhammad Ali built a professional conscript army and meritocratic bureaucracy, improved the irrigation system, reorganised the administrative structure, and secured control over the economy. He extinguished the last traces of the Mamluk ruling elite through a programme of extermination and rape, targeting Shayks, seeking tax free land, and maximizing state revenue from a vast agricultural system. The state was the main economic agent, purchasing agricultural commodities (cotton and wheat) at low prices to sell to the world market at higher prices, while subsidising the same products to feed to the domestic textile industry. The state had its institutional basis in a meritocratic bureaucracy, a conscript army, telegraph and rail networks, engineering schools and factories.²⁴

Mann's IMEP model allows us to clarify the power structure that defined this germinal moment in the Egyptian state and economy transition. Muhammad Ali's modernisation programme followed a fundamentally military logic, requiring all peasants to enlist, purchasing the most modern weapons, and sending conscripted Egyptian peasants to Arabia, Greece and the Sudan. In this way, Lugan describes Muhammad Ali as having "incarnated a new Egyptian nationalism".²⁵ But how "national" was the modernisation process, given that it excluded the population. Mishra details extractive political and economic institutions, implying potentially diverse "development" paths. Mohammed Ali's state destroyed

22 Mishra, 73-74.

23 Mishra, 73-74.

24 Laura Panza and Jeffrey G. Williamson. "Did Muhammad Ali foster industrialization in early nineteenth-century Egypt?" *The economic history review*, vol. 68, no. 1, Feb. 2015, 79-100.

25 Lugan, 119.

feudal grandees and stripped Islamic institutional landholdings, without sharing even a measure of economic and political power with the population. A modern economy run on low growth and a fattening military elite produces the social breakdown born of poisoned trust, and can hardly therefore be called “nationalism”.

Robert Solé explains how Muhammad Ali faced diverse modernization modes, before opting for military expansionism as the fundamental pattern. Muhammad Ali's expanding empire crushed Syrian insurrections, threatening Britain's “natural route to India”. By 1841, Muhammed Ali's new hereditary dynasty was built. Britain attacked, and Muhammad Ali's military forces were then annihilated and reduced to 18,000 men. European aggressors, fearing that Ottoman collapse would threaten the colonial geopolitical order, drove him from conquered Arabia, Crete, and Syria. Egypt's national economy accordingly shrank, Great Britain forcing “free exchange” upon the country. Egypt hence became an agricultural annex, securing raw materials for Britain's textile industry. Egyptian factories closed, buildings were deserted, and machinery abandoned. Two facts stand out: (1) Britain destroyed the modernising Egyptian economy, and reduced Egypt to a colonial resource in the standard imperial pattern; (2) Muhammad Ali singularly failed to build institutions which invested the Egyptian population in the modern reform process. Artisans and peasants suffered dispossession in labour, coerced and alienated, never seeing even slight improvement in their material conditions.²⁶

Mishra's account of an absence of the multiple countervailing forces to uncontrolled expansion of state power, in “the long building-up of scientific knowledge, technical skills, intellectual and political freedom”, shows how the French revolutionary experience of the vacuum was echoed in an entirely alternate context of colonial destruction of the lifeworld, a random occasion for independence (the successful British attack on French sea power), and a hurried

26 Robert Solé. *Ils ont fait l'Égypte Moderne* (Lonrai: Perrin, 2017), 56-59.

Egyptian “countermovement”, seeking to secure independence through a new “modern” power configuration. Indigenous constraining institutions that might have slowed the expansion of modern state power, through traditions of distributive power, had been initially undermined during the Napoleonic episode, and then completely destroyed by the military dictatorship of Mohammad Ali.

For Skocpol, revolutions simply come, like weather, or moods, unbidden, irrespective of “new goals, values, or system-transcending ideologies”.²⁷ Her research emphasises the “autonomous effects exerted by state institutions on political actors”.²⁸ She underestimates divergent “social imaginaries”, solidarity patterns, or circles of moral consideration. Solé argues that alternative modernization modes produce varying consequences. This argument, while conceiving collective agency in terms of institutional carriers, sees them functioning in circulatory relation to a social imaginary. That is the meaning of the nation-state, as a state in which the population is invested through collective practices, siring shared feelings of solidarity, trust and purpose. Had Muhammad Ali made Egyptians participants of modernization, rather than victims or objects, an emergent Egyptian nation might have better resisted imperial aggression. Forced male peasant labour and conscription, dispossession of women and children, expanding shanty towns, and legally empowered landowners, undermined the Muhammad Ali modernization scheme as a national process.²⁹ Under the Khedives, nevertheless, Egypt became the cultural and financial capital of the Arab world. Cairo was “graced with waterworks, gasworks [and] the new rail line from Alexandria, completed in 1858, shattered its isolation from the Mediterranean”. The ideal civilisation to which the Egyptian regime ideologically aspired was the French Second

27 Theda Skocpol. *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 114.

28 Mann, *Volume 2*, 52.

29 Ahmed, 132.

Empire (1852-1870), a modernising oligarchy with a supreme leader, showing the conjunctural power to condition the social imaginary.³⁰

The Muhammad Ali experience exemplifies the circle of violence and progress. We should note that it contained its own contradiction. "State power" is not necessarily "elite power", as it relates more to collective than distributive power.³¹ Collective power is the joint power of multiple actors cooperating through organised institutions, such as administrative, industrial and military structures, to realise purposeful ends. Muhammad Ali's modernisation scheme couldn't but expand collective power among sections of the population. Distributive power is the power of one actor over other actors, through the force of state-law and exclusive property rights. New actors emerged in the entwinement of classes and the nation through collective power. A similar inadvertent empowerment of the population through autocratic modernisation (i.e., institutional proliferation) awaited the Ottoman empire later in the 19th century under the Tanzimat modernisation experiment.³²

However, as we have seen, there was little room for civil society – that is, multiple autonomous institutions - in Mohammad Ali's statist scheme. To the extent that it did emerge, there were two sources: the military source and *Nahda* or the Arab renaissance. The most important site for the conjunctural merging of hitherto separate populations into a new civil society was the space of military institutions. Sometimes civil societies are engendered through abominable collective experiences. Consider Enora Chame's description of how "a new civil society was born" in Syria in 2012 in the early part of the Civil War:

"An entire population, fleeing those zones that had become battlefields, mixed together as never before, independently of their religions and ethnic origins. In the prisons, Syrians met, supported one another, shared

30 Mishra, 74

31 Mann, *Volume 2*, 52.

32 Fernée, *EV*, 196-244.

information, and struggled to survive torture and deprivation. A new civil society was hence being born, perhaps one of the only positive elements in the evolution of the country at that time.”³³

This tragic account of a new civil society born of violence has resonance for imagining how new communities were similarly formed through isolation of forced military recruits from their home environments, strict surveillance, corporal punishment such as the bastinado, forced marches across the desert, and an elaborate organizational system to identify and reinforce strict military rank. The militarisation of society implied a transformation of mass consciousness:

“... it is the fact that this was a conscript army that makes this institution occupy a prominent position in Egyptian nationalist historiography. It is often argued that by conscripting the Egyptian peasantry and by giving them the chance to bear arms and to defend their fatherland for the first time in centuries and even in millennia this army allowed the soldiers to discover their true identity, i.e., that they were essentially and truly Egyptians and that their identities as Muslims or as Ottoman subjects were either artificial or secondary.”³⁴

In this way, the army that Mohmmad Ali founded is seen as “the prime pillar of Egyptian independence”. However, “the population of Egypt, far from enthusiastically flocking to serve in the army, was in fact very resentful of military service and strongly resisted joining the colors.”³⁵ The military was based on an ethnic hierarchy:

“... an important feature of this army [was] the ethnic division between the officers and the men. For when he first conceived of founding a conscript army, Mehmed Ali certainly had no intention of allowing Arabic-speaking Egyptians to assume senior positions in the army. Rather, his plan was to appoint his personal slaves (*mamluks*) to high

33 Enora Chame. *Quand s'avance l'ombre. Mission à haut risque en Syrie* (Mareuil : Mareuil, 2022), 173.

34 Khaled Fahmy, “The Nation and its Deserters: Conscription in Mehmed Ali’s Egypt”, *International Review of Social History*, 43, 1998, 421-436.

35 Fahmy, 421-436.

positions, and his Turkish-speaking officers to lower ranks, while the Egyptian conscripts would make up the soldiery.”³⁶

Thus, in initially conceiving the plan of universal conscription, Mohammad Ali wrote: “since the Turks are members of our race and since they must be spared the trouble of being sent to remote and dangerous areas, it has become necessary to conscript around 4,000 men from Upper Egypt [to replace them]”. The interconnection between the military and other sectors of the state and economy became extremely tight. By the end of the 1820s, Egypt had become a military state. All schools, factories and hospitals were founded to serve the army. This explains, from 1830, the establishment of a police force and new court system, the streamlining of bureaucracy, the destruction of all potential rivals, the state trade monopoly and confiscation of properties to secure state revenue, a new irrigation system through forced peasant labour, and ubiquitous weapons and naval factories. However, from 1822, when the first conscription order was issued from Cairo, it set in train “a long and burdensome policy that exhausted the Egyptian countryside in an unprecedented manner”.³⁷ We see the following examples of public reactions:

“Immediately after introducing conscription in Lower Egypt in 1823 a big revolt erupted in Minufiyya province and the Pasha had to go there in person guarded by his own palace troops and assisted by six field cannons to subdue the revolt. The following year an even larger rebellion broke out in Upper Egypt that was soon joined by more than 30,000 men and women. Looting, arson and attacks on local officials were reported to the Pasha in Cairo who decided to deal with the rebellion by sending his newly formed troops to quell the revolt.”³⁸

Recognising the gravity of peasant resistance, Mohammad Ali contemplated strategies for winning over the population to the new system of military conscription, writing:

36 Fahmy, 421-436.

37 Fahmy, 421-436.

38 Fahmy, 421-436.

“Since the fellahin are not used to military service, they should not be dragged into the army by force. We have to attract their minds to it [. . .] This can be done by employing some preachers who should convince the fellahin that [serving in the army] is not like *corve’e* [and appealing to] the fellahin whose hearts have been enflamed by their religiosity and their zeal in defending Islam.”³⁹

When these “hegemonic” efforts failed, the following coercive strategies became the norm in the recruitment process:

“... the conscripting officers, on receiving their orders, would descend upon any given village and seize as many men as could be found “without any order, arrangement, inscription, or lot-drawing”. These men would then be tied together with ropes around their necks in groups of six or eight. They would then be marched off to the training camps escorted by the “conscription gang”, leaving behind a “heart-stricken, sorrowful group” of wives, mothers and children wailing and screaming and hopelessly trying to prevent the soldiers from taking away their men.”

In response to these experiences, the peasants began practices of mass evasion that certainly had the effect of breaking up traditional community bonds and inflicting displacement on an appalling scale:

“As soon as news of the approach of the recruiting party reached a village, “and it spread over the country like wildfire”, a wave of desertion followed with masses of families fleeing their homes and villages desperately trying to evade the conscription gangs. By the late 1830s this practice was so widespread that entire villages were found completely abandoned, leaving behind sad, deplorable villages “buried in their stillness, [. . .] where the dwellings of the poor inhabitants [. . .] still standing, neither blackened by fire, nor destroyed by war, nor decayed by time, but deprived of their inhabitants [who attempted to avoid the agents of the Pasha] by giving up house and home, and deserting, *en masse*, the devoted town or village”.⁴⁰

Fahmy, the author of this detailed account of conscription methods and the origin of the Egyptian standing army under

39 Fahmy, 421-436.

40 Fahmy, 421-436.

Mohammad Ali, therefore concludes with the following stark thesis: “there is no evidence that this central institution functioned along national lines”.⁴¹ As Mann argues in more general terms, “military is the social organization of physical force [and] is essentially authoritative and ‘concentrated-coercive’”.⁴² In earlier societies, it ensured positive cooperation such as in slave labour. Yet, in the Mohammad Ali modernisation scheme, all elements were not of equal importance. A central organising principle influenced the entire social formation, from material life to justice and social order. The organising principle was neither kinship with its networks of reciprocity, nor centralised rulership grounded in aristocratic hierarchies, but that of capitalism, that is, “capital with its self-expanding attributes”.⁴³ Military and state power fostered the expanding economic activity of Egyptian state capitalism. Egyptian modernity was patterned and structured in its beginnings by sociological forces favouring a military outcome in politics, precisely because new power politics excluded the nation in every way. Muhammad Ali boasted: “I was born in the same country as Alexander the Great, and the same year as Napoleon”.⁴⁴

The failure of the Egyptian state to reach the population through shared values and norms – either religious, liberal, socialist or nationalist - explains the high importance of ideological power during the same interval, in the form of the *Nabda* (“strength” or “force”). Ideological power is diffused, commanding through persuasion. The *Nabda* was transnational, with the distinctive organisational forms of ideological power in sociospatial transcendence, or, diffusion through boundaries of economic, military and political power organisations, to form new networks of social interaction.⁴⁵ The *Nabda* was originally launched by Christian families in

41 Fahmy, 421-436.

42 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 8-9.

43 Heilbroner, 79.

44 Solé, 39.

45 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 7.

Mount Lebanon, the *Al-Boustani* and *Al-Yaziji*, notably with the *Al-Medrassa al-watania* (national school) in 1863. After 1860, a large number of immigrants from Mount Lebanon arrived in Egypt, spreading the *Nahda* through diverse cultural sectors including the press, literature and the theatre.⁴⁶ We should note that the *Nahda* was spreading as a grassroots cultural movement through Egypt at the same time as the Ottoman state-down Tanzimat modernisation programme (1839-1876), and the *Nahda* in key ways anticipated the Young Ottoman democratic counter-movement.⁴⁷ In fact, as Dupont has explained, the *Nahda* was a vast ideological resource of often contradictory intellectual impulses responding to the complex institutional pressures of European imperial empire, traditional Ottoman politics, new national configurations, and experimental egalitarian legal structures associated with the secularism of the 18th century Enlightenment:

“The concept *nahda*, translatable by *risorgimento* or “renaissance”, evokes the championing of freedom in literature, the emergent idea of the nation, the rediscovery of an idealised medieval past, the conflict of generations and a general crisis of authority, and the predominance of a constitutional model in political matters. *Nahda* therefore had an inbuilt tension between openness to the other and enclosure within the self, between liberation and diverse reactionary postures regarding “westernisation”, with a strong identitarian element.”⁴⁸

We might point to just several of the features of the *nahda* to grasp its important institutional ramifications as a new social imaginary: (1) revival of the ideal of good Islamic government which, in the name of the common good, and due to the development of *qânûn* (a non-religious body of rules from legislative authority), guarantees the security of subjects and protects them from arbitrary

46 Florian Louis. *Incertain Orient : le Moyen-Orient de 1876 à 1980* (Paris, PUF, 2016), 94.

47 Fernée, *EV*, 196-244.

48 Anne-Laure Dupont. « Nahda, la renaissance arabe », *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 2009.

taxation and military levee; (2) the progressive abolition of slavery, from the 1840s in Tunisia, as well as abolishing the special status of Christians and Jews as *dhimmi*, or protected, in favour of a legal regime of equality with Muslims. That is, we see a shift towards a citizenship concept based on rights, and away from the population as subjects of the empire. Dupont has described these experimental new policies as a “juridic revolution”, which, combined with the deepening socio-economic inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims linked to European economic penetration of the Middle East, provoked interconfessional violence culminating in the tragic massacre of the Christians of Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860;⁴⁹ (3) state educational reform, oriented to secular training for new administrative and other functions, as well as the spread of the printing press, by which Cairo and Bayreuth became new centres of innovative literary production and translation, as well as sites for revival of classical Arab literature.

What is instantly visible, upon reviewing the dynamic cultural processes of the *nahda*, is how, particularly from the 1880s, the popular tendencies and statist reform began to overlap, within either a colonial framework (Egypt and Tunisia) or an autocratic modernising regime such as that of Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909). The ideal of *islâh*, of moral and religious reform aiming to correct deviations from the prophetic tradition (*sunna*) and to thereby perfect the world, also accordingly became a widespread feature of *nahda*.

Diverging Horizons: Khedive Dynasty and the Urabi Movement

Muhammad Ali's strategy constructed Egypt's 19th century “development” path, layers over time, ultimately clashing with Egypt's Urabi Revolution (1879-1882). In the Urabi experience, a *network* pattern emerges, in multi-class participatory politics.

49 Dupont.

Muhammad Ali's 1805-48 experiment in rapid economic change modernized state bureaucracy, military, and tax system, fostering growth in agriculture and industry. This established the Khedive dynasty, ruling until the 1952 Free Officer coup.⁵⁰ Khedive Ismail (1863-79) deepened the anti-Egyptian policy, favouring foreign aristocracy (i.e., Turks). Divide and rule fostered Egyptian nationalist identity within the military power orbit.⁵¹ Muhammad Ali's modernization path had military roots. He keenly observed nationalist movements abroad, citing the "American separation from England, Belgium from Holland, and Greece from Turkey" to justify Egyptian independence. Yet Muhammad Ali was equally horrified by Europe's liberal 1848 revolutions, vowing to militarily restore the reactionary Louis Phillipe (1830-48) to the French throne.⁵² His vision of Egypt as a nation concerned securing the power of his own dynasty against possible threats from the traditional imperial logic of Ottoman power.

There was dissent within Mohammad Ali's own ranks in terms of a national vision. In 1826, Sheikh Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873) was named imam of the first Egyptian scholarly mission and sent by Muhammad Ali to France to study the French language and translation until 1831. Charged with establishing a reform programme by Muhammad Ali upon his return, he founded a School of Languages in Cairo in 1835 and was influential in the development of science, law, literature and Egyptology. In 1834, he published *The Refinement of Gold* (*Takhlîs al-ibrîz fî talkhîs Bârîs*), an account of the quest for modern scientific knowledge during his stay in Paris. In this one instance of the first phase of the *Nahda*, launched by Muhammad Ali as a state project, with its genesis in a feeling of inferiority vis a vis Europe following the Napoleonic invasion, Ṭahṭāwî's book proved one catalyst to public debate that

50 Acemoglu/Robinson, 61, 120.

51 Zaheer Masood Quraishi. *Liberal Nationalism in Egypt* (Odisha: Kitab Mahal, 1967), 4.

52 Mishra, 73.

would culminate in the second phase of *Nahda* centring the concept of “reason” and “democratic participation in public politics” as interlinked features of a prosperous modern society.⁵³ Ṭaḥṭāwī saw the social order as established by God and the only limitations on the ruler’s authority in the dictates of his own conscience. He certainly had no concept of rights. The top-down vision of modernisation, however inadvertently, came to be challenged by the public debates he unwittingly triggered with his published writings on a theme decidedly related to the “scientific temper”.

Ṭaḥṭāwī had witnessed the 1830 July Revolution while in Paris, expressed a wish that the “Muslim lands would research science and industry”, had translated Machiavelli into Arabic, and “discovered” Egypt’s Pharaonic “national” heritage while in France. He urged universal primary schooling for girls, later, in Sudanese exile, charged with “dangerous reformism” under Abbas II Helmy (1892-1914).⁴⁷⁷ Ṭaḥṭāwī’s pluralism had its intellectual counterpart in the call for a “profane space for truth”, that “mathematical evidence concerns practical realities, and not belief”, reviving the *Donya/Deen* dualism of the 11-12th century Abbasid philosopher Ghazali (1058-1111).⁵⁴ Egypt’s 19th century “development” horizon presented a spectrum of meaningful differences, between *civilian* and *military* power. The 1879-1882 Urabi revolt foregrounded political and economic power, not military power, establishing social revolution and inclusive modernization as a new transnational pattern in anti-colonial politics. Leaders demanded modern parliamentary power sharing, as well as radical economic power redistribution, pushed by the direct mass participation which sustained the revolutionary momentum.

53 Louis, 94.

54 Mirsepassi/Fernée. *Deen and Donya*.

The Khedival Background to the Urabi Revolution

Between three intersecting continents, 19th century Egypt linked the British and French Empires. As ascendant middle classes became a social force by the 1860s, imperially moulded state-making logic served foreign and domestic elites. The Urabi experience underlines the potential power of oppressed populations, in self-protection, to fight for a revolutionized power configuration. Skocpol emphasises inter-elite conflicts, moments of political weakness, as crucial to successful revolutions.⁵⁵ Mohamed Tewfik Pasha (1879-92) replaced Khedive Ismail, forced to abdicate by a telegram from the Sublime Port under British and French pressures.⁵⁶ This permitted the military-led multi-class Urabi alliance, overdetermined by a mass peasant-based movement, to mount a revolt against the administration of Khedive Tewfik, which was under the influence of an Anglo-French consortium. The Urabi Revolution was a precursor of 20th century socialist revolutions, emphasizing the redistribution of economic power. Urabi undertook reforms of Egyptian military and civil administrations, until the Alexandria demonstrations of 1882 met with British bombardment and invasion, leading to Urabi's capture and the imposition of British control in Egypt.

Khedive Ismail's reign (1863-79) saw expanding commerce, education, agriculture, communications, and urbanization, economic power outpacing administrative infrastructure. Ismail subsidized his own "free" press.⁵⁷ He then resorted to military power. Ismail's 1876 "do or die" invasion of Abyssinia, amidst economic instability, pursued new revenues. It was a transnationally imagined enterprise, presented to an American diplomat as a greater acquisition than French Algeria.⁴⁸¹ If the Napoleonic image of a military saviour, defending revolution and church, was but fantasy,

55 Skocpol, 24-33.

56 Solé, 96-97.

57 F. Robert Hunter. *Europe under the Khedives. 1805-1879 From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy*. (Cairo: American University Press, 1984), 70.

1860s Ismail promoted equally simple dreams, predictably violent in consequence. Egyptian Empire would encompass Crete, Syria, Arabia, and the African Horn.⁵⁸ The Khedive “failed to impress the vast majority of his own people”.⁵⁹ The Egyptian Cotton Boom (1861-64) had produced modern schools, factories, and public health facilities (i.e., the Cairo clinic for eye diseases). The renaissance in Egyptian medicine, in a world where the masses routinely died from simple diseases (cold, diarrhoea, dirty water, worms), had roots in the military hospital. The American Civil War (1861-64) came to its bloody end, cotton prices crippled the Egyptian Boom in swollen private fortunes. Britain had turned to Egypt and India during the American Civil War for its cotton resources. The oppressive 1864 Suez Settlement was followed by high interest loans from European banks.⁶⁰ By 1865, external debt had extinguished the popular Egyptian efforts to promote mass education, diversify agriculture, and expand public communications.

The Khedive, under this colonial yoke, failed to “build institutions to accommodate the rising aspirations of many newly educated and self-confident Egyptians”. Large estates as concomitant of high office established a new cooperation among an ethnically diverse bureaucratic elite, who, as new property owners, designed self-protection policies. By 1875, European powers resolved to shatter Egypt’s new ruling combination. With French railway proliferation, the iron, coal, and steel industries linked Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern markets. The 1870s saw the countryside ravaged under heavy tax loads, imposed before the harvest, as peasant villages suffered severe famine.⁶¹

58 Juan R. I. Cole. *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East. Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 81.

59 Mishra, 76.

60 Hunter, 70-80.

61 Hunter, 212-213.

The 1881-82 Urabi Revolution: Afghani Germinates Multiple Ideologies

Egypt's 1881-82 Urabi revolution was Asia's first major anti-colonial insurgency organized on modern political tenets. Military officer leader Ahmad Urabi (1841-1911) was a village boy with religious education-cum-military conscript.⁶² Urabi was the first political and military leader in Egypt to rise from the *fellahin*, the class of peasant farmers and agricultural labourers across the Middle East. In Egypt, the *fellahin* had the additional ethnic connotation of indigenous Egyptian following the 641 Arab conquest, as well as distinguishing *fellahin* from Jews (traders) and Greeks (the ruling class). The story of Urabi's modern education and military service, as *fellah*, exemplifies the deep changes wrought by the modernising reforms of Khedive Ismail, which eliminated the barriers which had divided the Egyptian populace from the ruling military castes over centuries. With the abolition of exclusive access to military ranks for Egyptians of Balkan, Circassian, and Turkish origin, Ismail conscripted soldiers from every class and ethnic background inspired by the vision of building a "modern" and "national" Egyptian military and administrative class. Despite this upward mobility, Urabi became politicised through the experience of institutional capabilities failure, when, serving during the Ethiopian-Egyptian War (1874-1876), he returned "incensed at the way in which it had been mismanaged", and having decisively deemed the Khedive his adversary.⁶³ Most strikingly, the Urabi revolution represented a project of transitioning from the predominance of military power to new forms of civilian power. The project of wresting Egypt and Sudan from the control of the absolutist Khedive regime, itself subjected to foreign control of the European *Caisse de la Dette Publique*, was inspired by a legalistic vision of Egyptians having

62 Mishra, 188.

63 Wilfred S. Blunt. *The Secret History of the English Occupation in Egypt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 101.

equal standing before the law, and ultimately the demand by Arab-Egyptian deputies for a constitution that would grant the state parliamentary power.⁶⁴

Minimally organized anti-Khedive opposition preceded the arrival of Jamal al-Afghani (1838-97) in 1871, with intermittent insurrections in Egypt's countryside. Afghani's ideological revolution, launched the year of the Paris Commune, reached Egypt's mass and elite populations. In 1879, a *Times* of London correspondent described Afghani holding "the weight of a median law among the [Egyptian] lower and less educated classes". His Masonic gatherings electrified Egyptians – including Urabi, who was in attendance - with transnational narratives of anti-colonial struggle.⁶⁵ Afghani linked the issue of poverty to foreign occupation. Egyptian journalist Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi, a disciple of Afghani, described a local merchant "impoverished by a stagnant market and forced to cling for shelter to the hem of the foreigner, who can, if he pleases, ruin him or allow him to remain where he is".⁶⁶ The peasant, by one account, "could no longer eat bread; they are now living on barley meal mixed with water and raw green stuff, vetches etc." Britain believed that "no amount of misery or oppression would provoke [the Egyptian peasant] to resistance".

Afghani did not write systematically; therefore, his thought often reaches us through the writings of others in his circle, notably the Syrian Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi and his Egyptian disciple Islamic jurist Mohammad Abduh (1849-1905). Abduh applied Afghani's ideas to *Nahda* for the reconstruction of three concepts: (1) *Tawhid* or unity, in the double sense of the political unity of the *umma* and the religious unity which requires overcoming the multiple religious divisions within Islam to restore the pure essence; (2) *Ijtihad* or interpretation was required to replace *Taqlid* (imitation), in order

64 Elizabeth Thompson. *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2013), 61–88.

65 Mishra, 79-80.

66 Solé, 52.

to creatively allow sacred texts to meet the challenges of modern societies; (3) the concept of *Choura* (consultation), found in the *hadith*, provided proof that modern democracy has a source in the *sunna*.⁶⁷ These three intellectual innovations provide an alternative conceptual framework to fundamentalism, or simple return to the pure Islamic sources through either imitation of a master who is connected to the Prophet, or one of the many narratives of the Prophet's life derived from diverse sources.

Afghani's intellectual influence was therefore of a rich hermeneutical type, designed for resolving unpredictable new realities. His influence was, above all, however, upon the practical terrain of social action and institution building. Afghani launched Egypt's revolutionary newspaper explosion, spreading anti-colonial arguments in secularized language.⁶⁸ His "views from elsewhere" inspired pupil Zaghul, 1919 revolutionary leader, whose 1919 Wafd Party won 1923-4 Prime Ministerial elections. According to Abduh, Afghani transformed the rote "maze" of Al-Azhar University into a new civic space filled with critical debate.⁶⁹ A University sheikh, in 1880, described Afghani as a "wild man of genius", who preached the "necessity of reconsidering the whole Islamic position", through "an onward intellectual movement in harmony with modern knowledge". Afghani's concepts of the "Scientific Spirit", gained upon the terrain of anti-colonial struggle, preceded participation in Third Republic debates. Abduh attributed Egypt's transformed political landscape to Afghani: "The Egyptians in their public lives before 1877 put themselves completely under the will of the sovereign and his functionaries ... Amid this darkness arrived Jamal al-Din."⁷⁰

67 Dupont.

68 Hunter, 193-194.

69 Solé, 95-100.

70 Mishra, 87, 80.

Afghani before Egypt

Who was Afghani, prior to his arrival in Egypt? We need to know this in order to understand what his “stories from elsewhere” might have meant to Egyptians in that time and place. A Persian Shia, he posed as an Afghan. He thus employed the Sunni majority faith as a mobilizing axis. The north-west Iranian village of Afghani’s upbringing was a geopolitical no-man’s land between British India and Imperial Russia. The 1844 Babi uprisings must have impressed him at an early age by putting traditional class and gender relations into flux, showing other possibilities. Afghani was inquisitive about science from a young age. In the Qazvin madrasa, in 1848, the ten-year old analysed physical death, entering the cellar by night, and, removing the shroud, examined the corpse by candlelight to explore “causality”. As a twelve-year-Tehrani, Afghani told his teacher: “A request to understand intellectual problems has nothing to do with impertinence. The understanding of knowledge has no relation to greatness or smallness”.⁷¹

At nineteen, Afghani arrived in Bombay seeking the modern sciences, only to experience – although we do not know precisely what he saw - the 1857 Indian Revolt.⁷² Three hundred Meerut sepoy entered Delhi on horseback. Massacring the Christian population, they forced the imprisoned Emperor Zafar (1775-1862) to improbable leadership of a doomed uprising. A disorganized and unpaid peasant army fought Britain’s modern military. The Mughal capital overnight became smoking carnage. Food prices inflicted starvation. The British army, with Sikh and Pathan levees, sacked the capital. A nineteen-year-old officer recalled “orders to shoot every soul”. Survivors fled into the countryside. Insurgents were

71 Nikki R. Keddie ed. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism. Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din ‘al-Afghani’* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 13-14.

72 Ervand Abrahamian. *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 61-62.

stripped naked, tried, and hung. Sufis and scholars were hunted and hanged. Zafar was displayed “like a beast in a cage” as the “mastermind”. The old man remained silent, writing poetry on a wall with a burned stick.⁷³ Mughal Zafar was buried in a shallow grave by Empire, its location since forgotten.

We know that Afghani suffered from an identity crisis following these experiences. In a Kabul prison cell, awaiting expulsion from Afghanistan in 1868, Afghani expressed the confusion of a nonself: Shiites had “believed me a Wahhabi”, the “theists” had “imagined me a materialist”, in a poem serializing his parallel selves.⁷⁴ Afghani also wrote in 1868: “I am perplexed as to whom I should depend on and whom I should fight”. He understood this much from his Indian experience: Britain was the enemy, “a dragon which had swallowed twenty million people, and drunk up the waters of the Ganges and the Indus”.⁷⁵ It was in this spirit that Afghani reflected deeply on modern science. In 1866 Qandahar, Afghani charged traditional sciences with teaching him nothing, the ulama of being captives of doctrines. He stated: “Let us cast a glance at the achievements of others. By effort they have achieved the final degree of knowledge and the peak of elevation”. Afghani recognized that “decay” was not “internal” to Muslim societies. It came from “alarming shifts in international relations” requiring a need for “renewal by outside learning”.⁷⁶

In the 1866-68 interim, Afghani became a phantom of geopolitics. The Government of India’s representative grew absorbed in a riddle of police investigations. A mysterious foreign Sayyid was political advisor of the Amir of Afghanistan, in a tumult of dynastic conflagrations. His identity was a game of puzzles, and the secret manoeuvrings of a police enquiry were undertaken. The

73 William Dalrymple. *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 1-8.

74 Nikki R. Keddie. *Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din “Al-Afghani”: A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 54.

75 Keddie, *Response*, 54.

76 Mishra, 70, 52-56.

British Government of India, intrigued by this enemy, suspected the “mysterious personage” of being a “Russian emissary”.⁷⁷ By 1868, Afghani was expelled from Afghanistan. His covert plan - inciting a Russo-British war to ignite a mass Indian rebellion - was momentarily postponed. He hypothesised that “there is not an Indian living who does not pray for the advance of the Russians to the frontier of India”.⁵⁵² Thus, Afghani rode from triumph to defeat, with the heroic perseverance that characterized his lifelong struggle to overthrow British colonial power across the Muslim world.

It is from such travel experiences that Afghani articulated the “experiences from afar” that so impacted his Egyptian audiences on the eve of the Urabi Revolution. Afghani reflected deeply upon the power of modern military technology to crush mass uprisings; upon the potential power of traditional religion to mobilise revolutions; on the advantages of overcoming confessional divisions in anti-colonial struggle in a manner that we may call “national”; and upon the value of modern science itself. The Syrian Christian author Abid Ishaq (1856-85) recalled how Afghani “used to follow the movement of European knowledge and scientific discovery”.⁷⁸ The “eternity of the world” existed in “vital atoms, found in the atmosphere, formed, by a natural evolution”. The “stars revolve around one another through gravity”. The “belief in an omniscient Prime Mover was a natural delusion that arose when man was in a primitive state of evolution”. Only knowledge gave value and meaning: “Man went on progressing on the scale of knowledge and deriving light from the lamp of science”.⁷⁹

Afghani during the Urabi Revolution

Tewfik was enthroned under Anglo-French control in 1879. In 1881 Urabi rose up against forced conscription and ethnic

77 Keddie, *Biography*, 41.

78 Mishra, 78.

79 Response, 13.

discrimination within the military, mobilizing secret networks. Urabi's articulation of a new Egyptian nationalism was an anti-racist discourse that doubled with a socialist national discourse: "the labouring people are today emancipated and will no longer yield to slavery".⁸⁰ It spread through a dozen Arabic newspapers. James Sanua, an exiled Egyptian Jew in Paris, published *Abou Naddara Zarga* (The Man in Blue Spectacles). The Urabi upsurge encompassed all Egyptian classes. Peasants, landowners, traders and ulema forced Urabi's appointment as Minister of War. He declared: "A new era is beginning in Egypt", a "glorious mission is reserved for an army which is united, well ordered, and well disciplined, seeking the single goal of Egyptian national interest".⁴⁹⁶ A revolution in economic power confirmed the "social imaginary" in property relations, seizing and redistributing lengthy tracts of British property.⁸¹ Urabi organized a Constitution and Chamber of Deputies, establishing a political revolution for Egyptian rule of law. Both threatened British and French control over the Suez Canal.⁸² The Urabi vision of Egyptian transformation through democratic processes, legally protected liberties, and extensive land reform, confirm Afghani's essentially secular role in preparing the Urabi revolution. Full British colonization in 1882 crushed Egypt's popular aspirations for generations.

Afghani had entered Egyptian public life, in 1871, as an anticolonial insurgent unconcerned with God's will on earth. The "power of Westerners", he contended, occurred through "their advance in learning and education".⁸³ In 1871, at the Istanbul House of Sciences – amidst tumultuous Tanzimat elite-driven modernization – Afghani incurred expulsion and death threats as a *kafir*, for sundering "scientific autonomy" from "divine will". The sharia was open to "rational revision". The turn towards a

80 Solé, 95-100.

81 Cole, 268-282.

82 Townson, 84.

83 Mishra, 84.

new Pan-Islamist politics followed Afghani's 1879 expulsion from Egypt. Afghani watched the Urabi revolution he had helped to launch crushed from his remote refuge in India. Imperial police harassment then drove him from India in 1882, from where he migrated - sometimes vanishing off the map - to Belle Epoch Paris.⁸⁴

Afghani after Egypt

In 1883, Afghani wrote from Paris to a Lebanese Maronite disciple charging him with "excessive criticism of Easterners, who were suffering at the hands of foreign imperialists". Afghani had hitherto lamented "how a human being is treated in the East". The once critic of Middle Eastern states now sought to stifle all criticism, while uncritically celebrating the Ottoman state as "the unifier of Islam".⁸⁵ France's Third Republic was therefore the ideological cradle of Pan-Islamism. Shattered by the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), France launched full secular modernization to "catch up" before annihilation ensued. The resilient Catholic-monarchic countermovement was pitilessly marginalized in this panic over national survival. In a Rue de Seize garret, Afghani entertained a "curious party of strangers", including a "Russian lady, an American philanthropist, and two young Bengalis who announced themselves as Theosophists" come to "consult the great Sheykh".⁸⁶ Exiled Afghani's propaganda started purposefully addressing Muslims - within the invented category of "Easterners" - worldwide. "Easterners": universal victims of technologically advanced Empire, much as France trembled at its militarily superior rival, while labouring "developmentally' to turn the deadly tables.

The original Islamist inspiration was Afghani's post-Urabi Paris days, published in *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* (The Firmest Bond). It issued from a room near Place de la Madeleine, site of the 1830

84 Keddie, *Biography*, 212.

85 Mishra, 97.

86 Mishra, 99-100.

revolution, arguing that “there are worse evils than despotism”.⁸⁷ Banned in India and Egypt, this Arabic newspaper spread from Medina to Damascus, its title used by Afghani in 1883 to invoke the virtue of the autocratic Ottoman Caliphate.⁸⁸ From 1883 to 1884, Afghani waged propaganda war from the Third Republic, sending British military officials death threats in Egypt. It was perhaps an inspiration that he carried since adolescent experiences of the 1857 Indian Uprising. With the double “military-conjunctural” turning, 1857 and 1881, defined by multiple bottom-up revolutionary mobilizations, against impossible military odds, it became the most pragmatic of several alternative imaginings.

In France, Afghani encountered Third Republic leaders, including Leon Gambetta, escapee from Prussian-occupied Paris by hot air balloon.⁸⁹ He witnessed French social unrest. The 1880s self-organizing workers movement climaxed, anarchists and socialists seeking seats in the 1881 legislative elections.⁵¹¹ Afghani publicly debated the “Scientific Spirit”. Not merely academic, it guided democratic resolution in the subsequent Dreyfus Affair. Afghani denounced racist dogmas of “white exceptionalism” in scientific and technological progress. This colonial self-justification was taken for granted by many French intellectuals.⁹⁰ Afghani lived between the 1873 Assembly re-embrace of theocratic, monarchic, and authoritarian politics, under Colonel de Broglie’s “Moral Order”, and the 1894 onset of the Dreyfus Affair. The “Scientific Spirit”, he argued, was “the road to progress” upon which “all truth must depend”. It “frees man”. The clerical, anti-modernist, and anti-Semitic reaction, steadily seizing the French public imagination, would have been scandalized.⁹¹ Afghani lived amidst proto-Fascist

87 Mishra, 98.

88 Keddie, *Biography*, 214-215.

89 Vincent Duclert. *La République imaginée 1870-1914* (Paris : Belin, 2014), 44.

90 Mishra, 100-101.

91 Keddie, *Response*, 183-187.

“hegemonic” upsurges, organized around the hodgepodge of invented facts exemplified in Edouard Drumont’s 1888 *La France Juive* (Jewish France).⁹²

Afghani’s post-1881 Pan-Islamism was, upon examination, merely for the uneducated masses. Afghani saw “the Muslim religion” being “by its very essence opposed to the development of science”. Islam partook of a general rule:

“Religions, by whatever name they are called, all resemble each other. No agreement and no reconciliation are possible between these religions and philosophy. Religion imposes on man its faith and its belief, whereas philosophy frees him from it”.⁵³⁶

By “philosophy”, Afghani meant the “Scientific Spirit”. Afghani debated Orientalist Ernest Renan (1823-92) on the “Scientific Spirit”, in the 1883 edition of the “Journal des Débats”, attacking racist ideology while defending Universal Historicism.⁹³ Afghani’s 1870s teachings remained moulded by memories of the technological revolutions and coercive military power of “development”. Afghani was a modernist, obsessed “with the exigencies of anti-imperialist strategizing”.⁹⁴ He wrote: “What is the cause of the poverty, indigence, helplessness, and distress of the Muslims? ... There is no doubt that if someone does not spend his whole life on this great problem, he has wasted and ruined his life, and it is improper to call him a sage”. Afghani wrote: “wealth is the result of commerce, industry, and agriculture”, based on “agricultural science ... physics, chemistry, mechanics, geometry and mathematics”.⁹⁵ His writings anticipate the question of overcoming the poverty imposed on newly independent nations by the legacy of colonialism.

Afghani, in this way, was a major voice of the “scientific temper”. In the Albert Hall, in 1882, in Calcutta, shortly after his expulsion

92 Duclert, 241.

93 Keddie, *Biography*, 189.

94 Mishra, 53.

95 Keddie, *Response*, 121, 102-103.

from Egypt, Afghani declared “no end or limit to science”, and the “benefits of science immeasurable”. Afghani clearly understood that its benefits could be abused by those holding power over others. He said, “science rules the world”: “there was, is, and will be no ruler in the world but science”. The English, Afghani declared, “have reached Afghanistan; the French have seized Tunisia”. He clearly wrote about “development” before the term had been coined. In Hyderabad, he called for “digging, cutting, breaking, carving, boring, lifting, transporting, levelling, straightening, and weighing”. Afghani evoked “telegraph lines” and “steam power”, objective knowledge of “causes and conditions”, as the road to political emancipation and independence for the Muslim lands.⁹⁶

There was another, apparently incongruous, side to the agitator’s thought. Afghani recurrently evoked a double time: politics within a mythic context, as a cosmic war. In 1890, under police threat from Shah Nasir Ad-Din, Afghani took refuge in the inviolable Shrine of Shahzadeh Abd al-Azim, south of Tehran. Seven months amidst holy mirrors, courtyards, and information war, Afghani charged the regime with selling Iran to colonial interests. Royal guards invaded the Shrine, strangled and dragged him, thirsty and feverish, through ice and snow to the Ottoman border.⁹⁷ Afghani later recalled the ordeal as the final battle of Imam Husain outside Karbala unfolding.⁹⁸ His suffering, on a cosmic plane, was Iran’s salvation. The Shah was cast in the eternal role of a cosmic villain. History is theatre with a puppet master: this was also part of Afghani’s “social imaginary”. Afghani’s remote assassination order from Caliphal imprisonment in Istanbul, in 1896, killed Shah Nasir Ad-Din (ruled 1848-1896), who he charged with the deceit and bankruptcy of failing to modernize and so protect Iran.

96 Keddie, *Response*, 113-121.

97 Niyazi Berkes. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), 186-7.

98 Keddie, *Biography*, 328-29.

The Category “Easterner”

Afghani’s “Scientific Spirit” focused on secular “causality”, in 1881, in Princely Hyderabad, deriding theology. Promoting “abandoning the bonds of tradition”, he urged “Easterners” to “cast your glance on this wide world” through “events and their causes”.⁹⁹ Afghani wrote, in 1883: “A true believer must turn from the path of studies [of] scientific truth, studies on which all truth must depend”.¹⁰⁰ In Afghanistan, “a man following no particular religion”, in Paris, a “free thinking socialist news columnist”, and, in Egypt, a Masonic Temple leader, Afghani was a human kaleidoscope.¹⁰¹ The category “Easterner” may have been Afghani’s major contribution to the new social imaginary of anti-colonial politics. The transnational “Easterner” crystalized in the 1870s, as Young Ottoman Namik Kemal (1840-1888) explained:

“Twenty years ago, the fact that there were Muslims in Kashgar was not known. Now public opinion tries to obtain union with them. This inclination resembles an overpowering flood which will not be stopped by any obstacle in its way”.¹⁰²

The democratic and multi-cultural genesis of the anti-colonial “Easterner” category was manifest in the 1877-78 Young Ottoman revolution. Namik Kemal insisted that “neither Christian nor Muslim politics exist”, for “there is only one justice”. To “deprive humanity of freedom”, he argued, was as to “deprive them of food”.¹⁰³ The Young Ottoman/Tanzimat clash embodied the “development” problematic as an issue of differing roads. The Tanzimat (1839-78) experimental survival-bid in top-down

99 Keddie, *Response*, 101, 120

100 Keddie, *Response* 183

101 Keddie, *Biography*, 182-200, *Response*, 115.

102 Mishra, 90.

103 Serif Mardin. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 281-302.

modernization excluded mass participation, “securing [elite] position at the heights of Ottoman society”.¹⁰⁴ Yet proliferating administrative, military and taxation structures opened restricted institutions (i.e., mass conscript army, merit-based bureaucracy, secular vocational schools) while threatening older vested interests. The centrality of the conjunctural dynamic is again manifest in “self-protective” secularizing institutional proliferation.

The re-ordering of power produced upheaval and the revolutionary 1876 Constitution – the marginalized new administrative classes sought alliances with a broader public. Turkey’s democratic revolution was duly crushed by the Sultan under the cover of the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish war. Empire’s subsequent 1882 annihilation of the Urabi Revolution seemingly proved it: organized liberal politics could not survive the imperialist pressures torturing West Asia. Afghani’s new Pan-Islamism became personified at the state-level in the anti-Western propaganda campaign of Abdülhamid II.¹⁰⁵ Abdülhamid II was using, with different ends in view, the same ideology to bolster legitimacy through religious appeal. “Social imaginaries” lack ideological cohesion, becoming employed by tyrants and revolutionaries alike for opposite ends. The Pan-Islamist “social imaginary” presented a new and effective weapon against Empire across Asia. Afghani’s misjudgement tragically sired the circulatory linking of autocratic Middle Eastern regimes and those seeking to overthrow them.

It follows that Afghani was an experimentalist, not a dogmatist. In India, he had recognized Hindu-Muslim unity as the ideal weapon to overthrow Empire, ideologically anticipating the 1920 Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement. Afghani had urged a multicultural and secular Egyptian nationalism, before the British bombardment of Alexandria reduced the Urabi Revolution to cadavers, hunger, and disease, with 35,000 refugees flooding out of the burning city.

104 Mishra, 65.

105 Keddie, *Biography*, 129.

Wars and Revolutions: The Double Movement

A transnational military vulnerability crisis engendered the Urabi Revolution, and the Dreyfus Affair: the Russo-Turkish War (1877-8) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), and their socio-political impacts. These military defeats revealed “developmental” deficiencies, through dangerously better modernized neighbours. The French military, ensconced in aristocratic “purist” dreams, closed to Jews and republicans, and having eliminated mass conscription (since Napoleon III), was overpowered by Prussia’s industrially advanced *levee en masse* along with Emperor Napoleon. A republic was proclaimed in Paris. France became a republic with the emperor’s seizure in battle by an industrially stronger adversary, thereby removing the yoke from the French population.

In Egypt, Ismail’s military experiments in colonizing Somalia, Abyssinia, and the Sudan (he declared, “to be one large cotton field”), were modelled on the American frontier experience. The Egyptian military was riven with the institutional racism of Khedive Ismail’s discriminatory policy, Turkish soldiers viewing Egyptians as natural inferiors.¹⁰⁶ Like the “Emperor of the French”, dependent on the landowning and professional elite, Ismail’s policy was anti-nationalist, designed to exclude the popular classes from participation in power. Ismail threw wild parties, as at the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal, declaring “my country is no longer in Africa but Europe”. Indian maharajas, Levantine merchants, European diplomats, and desert chieftains filled his entourage.¹⁰⁷ The 1878 Russo-Turkish War hastened Egyptian collapse, as mass revolt and military division erupted in a popular retaking of the national transition.

Multi-class mass mobilizations, in both, produced founding moments. Egypt saw, in 1881-2, a historically unprecedented

106 Cole, 82.

107 Mishra, 75.

popular movement.¹⁰⁸ Colonel Urabi united a coalition of Egyptian officers, provincial notables, and proto-constitutionalist urban intelligentsia.¹⁰⁹ For the first time, Egyptian government located the limits of sovereignty through a formal separation of powers.¹¹⁰ This protective move was no contamination by a Western ontology. The Urabi Revolution, the Young Ottoman revolution (1876) and the Iranian Tobacco Revolt (1891-92), Afghani's other organizational achievement, set democratic revolutionary precedents across the Middle East. The Dreyfus Affair saw an innocent Jewish man, condemned through an organized tissue of lies, rescued by a multi-class mass public action unparalleled in scale since the 1871 Commune.¹¹¹ The conjuncture pitted authoritarian and democratic political paths in modern France, the future was unmade everywhere. An entirely different course was possible, emblazoning Europe's future along a far more dictatorial path.

Pan-Islamism, in Afghani, pragmatically responded to institutional-capability failure, once Parliaments and free press were repeatedly extinguished by British colonial policy. For Lord Evelyn Baring Cromer (1841-1917), Egypt's uncontested ruler from 1883 to 1907, "Egypt was an agricultural country", and had to "remain that way".¹¹² With British occupation, not by coincidence, the thrust towards girls' education was arrested.¹¹³ Despite censorship, the Egyptian press proliferated, with Christian immigrants from Syria organizing a nationalist press demanding "complete independence".¹¹⁴

108 Cole, 111.

109 Joel Gordon. *Nasser's Blessed Movement. Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 40.

110 Cole, 236.

111 Duclert, 277-8.

112 Solé, 125.

113 Ahmed, 137.

114 Quraishi, 5.

Afghani: Modernism as Hermeneutics and Information War

Afghani's 1881 Hyderabad "Benefits of Philosophy" evokes the Qur'an as infinite book, "the macrocosm" where "each individual is a letter, each species a word, each race a line, and each microcosm a page." It defies the quantitative: "No end exists for this great Book. Its letters, words, lines, and pages are incapable of being counted by man". Thus, hermeneutically, Afghani rejects absolute knowledge. Claims of "perfect comprehension of the world" indicate "suffering from compound ignorance or madness".¹¹⁵ Knowledge of God is secondary. The Islamic tradition is opened to modern science, an existential experience in the hermeneutical labyrinth. The plasticity of the imagination implies something akin to Paul Valéry's (1871-1945) Third Republic surrealism. The "Bossuet of the Third Republic", Valéry invented spiderly occult machinations to justify *raison d'état*.¹¹⁶ He wrote that "society lives on illusions. All of the society is but a collective dream".¹¹⁷

Maxime Rodinson (1915-2004) explains that the Prophet Mohammad never intended to produce a literary work. Revelation was a fundamentally non-verbal experience, becoming verbalized subsequently. Mohammad determined to present revelation with an intelligible meaning. Precisely thus, Rodinson argues, the revelation differs – as "stream of consciousness" transmitted into words – from the automatic writing of Surrealism, where coherence was an obstacle in principle to the "immortal message". Mohammad intended a coherent universal message.¹¹⁸ Afghani undermined this commitment to coherence, evading scientific objectivity as threat to Qur'anic revelation. A poetic universe of boundless interpretation defined the human condition, nearer to the fundamental Surrealist valorization of irrationality. This Surrealist thinking reached

115 Keddie, *Response*, 114.

116 Benoit Peeters. *Paul Valéry. Une Vie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2016), 297.

117 Paul Valéry. *Cahiers 1894-1914 XIII* (Paris: Gallimard, 2016), 50.

118 Maxime Rodinson. *Mahomet* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 121.

its apogee with the 1927 Moroccan War, but scarcely survived Stalinism – but for its poststructuralist adherents.¹¹⁹

A London Times correspondent wrote: “from a café surrounded by disciples ... Afghani lays down the law as he deems expedient for the time ... no striking originality in his views ... nor that fanaticism to which he is credited ... For European interference he has no toleration. The cry of ‘Egypt for the Egyptians’ he maintained to its utmost conclusions”.¹²⁰ Afghani’s surrealism never prevented universal scientific objectivity from overriding cultural identity. In 1882 in Calcutta, Afghani wrote: “The strangest thing of all is that our ulama these days have divided science into two parts. One they call Muslim science, and one European science ... They have not understood that science is that noble thing that has no connection with any nation”.¹²¹ Because perception is the only reality, and everything an interpretation, Afghani simultaneously denied totalizing scientific objectivity. He had legitimate precedents. The multiple truths of Shi’ism had valorised secrecy and dissimulation.¹²² Truth’s multiple ways of delivery depended upon audience. In Muslim philosophy, only the select few understand scientific argument. The masses are moved by emotions and images.

Afghani, affirming modern science and universal reason, came to express certain views of a counter-Enlightenment thinker. “Universal equality”: in 1881, he argued: “The real cause of the superiority of man is his love for privilege and distinction”. The French Revolution had “overthrown duty”, through believing that “aside from nature nothing exists in the world”. The popular masses are moved by imagined possibility, in “miracles and hellfire”.¹²³ In 1882, the new Islamic century (1299), the self-declared Mahdi was

119 Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 105-46.

120 Keddie, *Biography*, 116-117.

121 Keddie, *Response*, 107.

122 Keddie, *Biography*, 15.

123 Keddie, *Response*, 150, 159, 127.

divinely guided, signalling time's end. His fast military seizure of the Sudan petrified European populations, while electrifying Muslim populations everywhere. Hailed as a "candidate for the post of caliph", the Ottoman sultan himself trembled.¹²⁴ Afghani officially became "the Mahdi's principal agent in Europe", while in fact never having met him.¹²⁵ Embracing *raison d'état*, Afghani urged that "Orientals must uncritically support their existing government".¹²⁶ His 1883 French newspaper article stated:

"All Muslims await the Mahdi and consider his coming as an absolute necessity ... Does England hope to stifle the voice of the Mahdi, the most awesome of all voices, since its power is even greater than the voice of the Holy War, which issues from all Muslim mouths?"¹²⁷

It was a Nietzschean act of information war. In Paris, in 1883-4, Afghani wrote: "The masses do not like reason, the teachings of which are understood only by a few select minds. Science, however fine it may be, cannot completely satisfy humanity's thirst for the ideal".¹²⁸ Being "human" was doing "philosophy", "the escape from the narrow sensations of animality". He divided human beings ontologically from animals, using Hegelian ascending civilizational grades: "some men rose and reached a position on a higher plane than that of Negroes, the position of the Caucasian man".¹²⁹ The colonial argument, in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, establishes racism upon the premise of "development" as a universal metaphysical-cultural (not biological) schema.¹³⁰ Afghani argued that the "rural child", as opposed to the "urban child", is "close to the life and existence of animals".

124 Mishra, 91.

125 Townson, 4.

126 Keddie, *Biography*, 184.

127 Mishra, 91.

128 Keddie, *Response*, 187.

129 Keddie, *Response*, 10, 35.

130 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 84-96.

Afghani therefore clearly internalized elements of colonial discourse. It is perhaps because he shared visceral reactions with European conservative traditionalists. He was horrified upon hearing that “chemical analysis has shown no difference between human sperm and the sperm of a bull or a donkey”.¹³¹ Afghani rejected Darwin’s findings on species: assemblies of genes, interacting randomly within shifting environments, entailing a holistic and non-anthropocentric vision where species lack the essential distinctions of metaphysical dogma. Afghani’s moment of colonial weakness slipped upon the *speciesism* he shared with human vanity everywhere. Here is the irony in his reputation as Islamist “purifier”. His Islamism was a heteroclite of conflicting components, an experimental offspring, a materialist “social imaginary” shaped kaleidoscopically of the transnational capitalist upheaval of his lifetime.

The “Scientific Temper” in Egypt after the Urabi Revolution

The feminism of Hoda Charawi (1879-1947), Zaghlul’s politics, and Taha Hussein’s reflections, variously affirm the prolongation of the “scientific temper” as an enduring tradition in modern Egyptian political discourse.¹³² Hussein, educational revolutionary, born poor in rural Maghgha, was – according to Muhammed Arkoun (1928-2010) – most successful in generating “fruitful discussion” to dispel the “illusion that Islamic thought can contribute to debate about itself only within the cognitive frame of reformation (*islah*)”. Islam was not incommensurable with other world traditions. It could flower interactively with multiple traditions. Hussein’s transnational cosmopolitanism differentiated identity and truth, an affirmation of scientific secularism following Abu Hamid Ghazali (1058-1111).¹³³ Arkoun writes, the “liberal writer and thinker Taha Hussein” faced

131 Keddie, *Response*, 112-113, 135.

132 Solé, 137-79.

133 Mirsepassi/Fernée. *Deen and Donya*.

“fundamentalists who rejected his contribution as too favourable to Western culture and close to a ‘bourgeois’ anti-socialist ideology”.¹³⁴ Hussein critiqued Mohammed Ali’s autocratic modernization, while defending gender equality and attacking Fascism. He detailed the mass hunger and privation dynamic driving participation in madrassas.¹³⁵ Initially welcoming the 1952 downfall of Egypt’s corrupt monarchist regime, Hussein found himself silenced under Nasser’s one-party regime.

134 Arkoun, 88, 304.

135 Taha Hussein, *Le Livre des Jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 150-58.

CHAPTER 4

Rabindranath Tagore: The Swadeshi Movement (1903-1908) and The “Scientific Temper” as Multiplying Times and Spaces

Swadeshi: Multiplying Times and Spaces

The social imaginary of the Swadeshi was transnational, as we see Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) drawing upon the rural development models of Armenian nationalists in Russia.¹ Early 20th century political actors recognized they were in “the crucible of a unique international moment. Sarkar has written of how “the Indian revolutionaries, wandering throughout the world in perennial quest for shelter and foreign arms, helped to end the parochialism of our national movement...”² The Swadeshi moment was in this way linked directly to the emergent Pan-Islamist movement discussed in the previous chapter. Cemil Aydin has documented “a global anti-western moment” inspired by the Japanese defeat of Russia in the 1904-5 Russo-Japanese war, generating “a global public sphere” of

1 Sumit Sarkar. *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), 48,65.

2 Sarkar, 75.

which Pan-Islamism in the 1880s was one offshoot.³ Menon raises the following problematic with regard to the multiple transnational circuits threading through the Swadeshi in a centre-less global mass mobilisation: “what exactly was the region brought into existence by the anti-Partition agitation?”⁴ He argues for a revisitation of the partition of 1905 in terms not of a homogenous national history but a spatial history of overlapping patterns of uneven development, spatial inequity, and territorial politics:

“At the turn of the twentieth century a geography of political affinity that was resolutely anti-imperial and anti-capitalist emerged through the movements of nationalist partisans, anarchists, and revolutionaries. Through a wide swathe from Mexico to Singapore, from Berlin to the Philippines, and from Paris to Johannesburg cutting across the borders of several colonial empires, ideas and people travelled creating an alternative map of freedom.”⁵

Menon emphasises the historical rupture produced by World War I: “Swadeshi was part of this moment of the questioning of a European hegemony which many have argued came to be challenged only by the First World War”.⁶ That is to say, the project of “modernity” had until World War I “continued to be seen as singular and universal”, with Japan as “a successful achievement within an Asian space”. The Swadeshi partook of a new epoch “located at the cusp of the earlier explosion of spaces and identities”, where the rudimentary criteria for a successful “modernity” began to be fundamentally challenged by new visions. The Swadeshi diaspora were scattered from Mexico to Berlin, and Tokyo to London, mixing Irish, Egyptian, and Russian anti-Tsarist political

3 Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier. *Competing visions of World Order: Global moments and movements, 1880s-1930s* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 213-236.

4 Dilip M. Menon. “The many spaces and times of Swadeshi”, *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 47, No. 42 (October 20, 2012), 44-52.

5 Menon, 44-52.

6 Menon, 44-52.

exiles in revolutionary constellations that suggest the creation of a new transnational civil society.⁷ Menon writes that “... the de-territorialised politics of affinity generated by swadeshi, over and against the imagined community of the nation, was its greatest legacy”. This occurred through “filiations on an emerging map of freedom the world over [which] created nodes, strategies, techniques of power and technologies of the self, and created another paradigm against the dyad of state power versus public representation that the moderates had been trapped in”.⁸

Tagore and Bose: The “Scientific Temper” in the Bengali Renaissance

Tagore’s cautious embrace of the “science temper” was influenced by Sir Jagadishchandra Bose (1858-1937), India’s first modern physicist. Bose was born in 1858, just a year after the 1857 uprising, while Tagore was born in 1861. Sibaji Raha writes that, in order to understand the Bengal Renaissance in a new light, the interaction between Tagore and Bose must be explored. Tagore described the meaning of their friendship in these terms:

“When we were trying to find the actual course of our lives, we interacted and gave each other support. So, our letters also not only give a record of our personal interactions but if we could put all these letters together that will give a very good example, a very good depiction of the Bengali society of that time and the history of the entire evolution.”⁹

In the following passage, Raha describes how when the two men first met Tagore was in a mental limbo as the result of personal grief, and had sought solace in a mysticism to which Bose seems to

7 T.R. Sareen. *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1979), 37.

8 Menon, 44-52.

9 Sibaji Raha. *Acharya J. C. Bose and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore: The Tale of a Great Friendship* (New Delhi: Occasional Publishing 23, IIC, 2022), 1-20.

have presented an intellectual counterpoint in the modern scientific method:

“In 1902, Tagore lost his wife on 23 November and five years later, in 1907, his youngest son [to] cholera on 23 November. In fact, these coincidences led Rabindranath to even turn to occult practices for a number of years. Interestingly, this was also a period when the friendship of Rabindranath and Jagadish Chandra Bose was at its highest.”¹⁰

Both belonged to the Brahmo Samaj, but they did not know each other. Tagore first met Bose after his tour of England in 1896-97, when he demonstrated wireless transmission of signals in the Royal Institution. Bose is important to understanding the “scientific temper” because of his ethical convictions about the scientific vocation: “the philosophy with which he founded the Bose Institute [was that] the fruits of knowledge should be free for the entire human civilization and for the world to enjoy without hindrance”. We understand the meaning of this philosophy upon reviewing two formative experiences that shaped Bose’s outlook. The first experience revealed to Bose how the logic of capitalism can corrupt the universality of science:

“...in 1901, when Bose was on a tour of England to demonstrate wireless signalling. [...] several industrialists told him, ‘Please do not reveal all your secrets, all the details of your experimentation. There is money in it and you can’t imagine how much. So, we will take out a patent, we will only take half the profit, but that will also give you tremendous amount of money with which you can further your research and take it ahead’. [...] Bose, in a very passionate letter, wrote to Rabindranath, ‘I am really shocked at the greed for money in western society. If I ever fall into this trap, I will simply not be able to do even a part of what I intend to do [...]so, I turned them away.’¹¹

In a second instance, Bose experienced racial discrimination and abuse of power in his career as a scientist because he dared

10 Raha, 1-20.

11 Raha, 1-20.

to do research that undermined the colonial status quo. In 1901, Bose “started talking about things the West had not anticipated, or had not the means to establish by their own methods”. His entire credibility was therefore called into question: “There were statements such as, after all he is a product of the East where rather than objective science, speculation and imagery has a greater role to play”. Bose’s articles, “which had already been accepted for publication by the Royal Society, were withdrawn or withheld”, and the “machinations of a powerful section of Englishmen” prevented him from returning to England to complete his research. Upon the basis of these experiences, we can impart some of the meaning of the “scientific temper” as Bose might have imparted it to Tagore. Science should be in the service of improving the welfare of the mass of the people. To realise this aim, science must be freed from both the ceaseless accumulation of profit that overrides every other consideration, and the racist system that had been built by empire to serve this end. As we saw with Mohammad Ali, when all sources of social power become deeply coercive under an authoritarian modernising state, the region of popular resistance shifts to the ideological power associated with popular religion. As Menon has written:

“Many of these imaginings trying as they did to stand outside of the corrupting influences of commerce and state power assumed a religious mode, tending at worst towards forms of revivalism, but at their best towards a grammar of ethical and disciplined action in the world”.¹²

Transnational Encounters: The Multiple Genesis of the “Lifeworld” Phenomenology: Seeking Home in the Modern World

Contemporaries Tagore and Husserl spoke of a transnational “lifeworld” concept in ways that hold an elective affinity. Tagore’s *Home and the World* (1915-16) examined the “lifeworld”

12 Menon, 44-52.

phenomenologically within India's anti-colonial freedom struggle. Where "phenomenology" investigates being an entity capable of unique experience, Tagore was a phenomenologist. He agreed that "impersonal scientific fact" can be "measured". This was the "impersonal aspect of truth". But what "merely gives information" and "measurement" is not "meaning", which is irreducible to "a mere grouping of atoms and molecules". This more "fundamental truth" is independent of "outward facts".¹³ It is difficult to find a more concise statement of "phenomenology". Husserl and Tagore aspired to a "post-traditional" universalism, not to "follow any tradition".¹⁴ Tagore wrote in 1924: "The impertinence of material things is extremely old. The revelation of spirit in man is modern. I am on its side, for I am modern".¹⁵

Husserl and Tagore were concerned with retrieving *home*. Tagore argued that "Science urges us to occupy by our mind the immensity of the knowable world", but we are "aliens and perpetually homesick".¹⁶ Exile has been central to "phenomenology" since Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), portraying the alienated "absolute" returning painfully to "itself" through a "dialectical process". Hegel's intellectual method sought *a way home* spiritually to God, "inevitability" entailing a "conflict free society". Themes of *exile* and *purity* persisted for Husserl. To crack the great metaphysical nut of "quality", by retrieving its "pure source", private experience must flood public space. Severe conflict among heterogeneous assessments of what is important in life are a foregone conclusion.

In Vienna, in 1935, Husserl delivered *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. It was a world caught between an interwar "phenomenal will to believe in utopia", and

13 Rabindranath Tagore. *Rabindranath Tagore Omnibus II* (Delhi: Rupa, 2015), 70-73, 55.

14 Tagore, *Omnibus*, 50, 55, 63, 71, 78.

15 Krishna Dutta. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-minded Man* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), 247.

16 Tagore, *Omnibus*, 94.

deepening malaise about *all organized* politics.¹⁷ Husserl's "crisis" thesis has flourished: modern physical science had forgotten the "lifeworld". Empathy, compassion, the basis for just communities, is lost. The causally self-contained Newtonian universe functions without meaning or subjectivity. It strongly resembled Tagore's view, who wrote of the "vanishing shadow" of a "society hospitable", "full of simple faith and the ceremonial poetry of life".¹⁸

Husserl spread phenomenology with post-traditional religious fervour. Its attempt to wed science to ethics was a humanist antidote to 1930s political irrationalism and racism. Husserlian "phenomenology" was an expression of the "scientific temper" in the eastern European context. The "scientific temper" was manifest in the struggle of minorities to survive organized persecution. It expressed the dangers of modernizing states and the attendant political calamities for minorities. The conniving of Empire in Bengal reduced Tagore's once ruling strata to a new Hindu minority in a Muslim majority territory. Lords of the landed empires became the minorities of modern nation-states. In *My Reminiscences* (1911), the child feared "transgressing the circle": for to "leave the house was forbidden to us", and, "beyond my reach stretched this limitless thing called the Outside". Gone was old Bengal: "the modern city-bred spirit of progress had just triumphed over the lush green life of our ancient village community".¹⁹

The "lifeworld" (*Samaja*) was Tagore's principal discovery, undergirding his Ethic of Reconciliation: "the developer must strive to be in sympathy with the developing", against "imposed solutions".²⁰ *Samaja* is a common Sanskrit term, adopted by Bengali and other regional languages like Hindi and Telugu, usually defined as "society, and containing the Hindu religious

17 Mazower, 125.

18 Tagore, *Omnibus*, 121

19 Tagore, *Omnibus*, 417.

20 Krishna Dutta. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-minded Man* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), 13.

notion of “association”. Tagore’s concept of *Samaja* underwent important changes between 1901 and 1930.²¹ His concept of India’s “syncretic civilization” (*Bharatvarsha*, 1902) grounded his 1901 school, his university, and his agricultural projects. The Ethic of Reconciliation presumed a heterogeneity of viewpoints within one society, a mobilized citizenry. In his 1901-06 writings, we nevertheless find the predominance of certain revivalist themes, in the early formulation of *samaj* vs state, which exalted “oriental civilization” and the “Hindu past”, as well as the “values of caste”, and even “sati”. In 1904, Tagore envisaged Indian national unity through Hindu *samaj*. Tagore’s perspective began to change from 1908 as direct contact with village realities dissipated his illusions and persuaded him of the “immobility of rural life”. As the aim of Pax Britannica was stability not equity, everywhere the rural elite was consolidated or attempts were made to create one. Cornwallis’ Permanent Settlement was a device for guaranteeing revenue and military stability in a time of war, to reinforce social control and settle large and productive areas of Bengal. Its goal of progressively raising land revenue returns stood in direct contradiction of hopes of material improvement for the peasantry.²² Tagore wrote: “I no longer feel any desire to idealise the Hindu *samaj* through delusions pleasant to the ear but ultimately suicidal”.²³ It is from 1907 that Tagore adopts a “historically accurate response”, that is, an embrace of the “scientific temper”, in what became his own specific modernist approach. This new modernist approach centred the advocacy of “constructive work”, an essential element of which was Tagore’s acknowledgment of his own class position.²⁴ In 1930, Tagore proclaimed: “my sorrow is that I have been brought up from childhood as a parasite”.²⁵ Throughout these transformations,

21 Menon, 44-52.

22 Stein/Arnold, 106.

23 Sarkar, 296.

24 Sarkar, 69-71.

25 Sarkar, 297.

Tagore understood *Samaj* as a project of formulating the ethical roots of politics in everyday life, which corresponded to a mistrust of state power.²⁶

Habsburg and British Empires were commonly shaken by high-speed scientific, industrial, and political innovation, the capitalist search for new fields of investment comingled with total war, and weakened populations at the mercy of the better organized and powerful. Their “lifeworld” concepts burned with the creative destructiveness of technological revolution. Husserl’s “phenomenological” movement dominated early 20th century European thought. Moravia belonged to Austria-Hungary. An assimilated Jewish family fell into the clutches of what became “the Sudetenland” under 1930s German aggression. Phenomenology was political, just as Adolph Hitler (1889-1945) watched India in the 1930s. Were the British, Hitler wondered, too lax in racial policy, losing control of miraculous “rule over millions by a handful”?²⁷ Transnational “social imaginaries” linked colonialism and fascism. Hitler declared Europe a “racial entity” in 1941. Lessons from British imperialism paralleled his planned Eastern European Empire. Trans-European slavery made Ukraine Hitler’s “new Indian Empire”. The “spiritually unbridgeable” (i.e., hierarchically supreme) German Reich was threatened by “Jewish intellectuals”, figures like Husserl, with their “Asiatic mode of thinking”.²⁷ Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) voiced fears of India – “industrial regions” are “coming into being”, and the “unassailable privileges of the white races ... thrown away ... The exploited world is beginning to take its revenge on its lords”.²⁸

Orientalist and anti-Semitic imaginings comingled, in the hierarchic language of metaphysically pure identity. The organic connection of nation, peoples and territory is an instance of ontological inflation, when, in reality, nations are the prolonged

26 Menon, 44-52.

27 Mazower, 150, 141.

28 Mazower, 110.

invention of miscegenated times and spaces. Menon has written that “cosmopolitanism is less a view from nowhere and more a nesting of multiple and mutually compatible affiliations”. He explains how Tagore came to recognize that “sentimental invocations of home underlie the restructuring and entrenchment of upper caste patriarchy from the late 19th century on in Bengal”. Ultimately, in “Tagore’s writings as much in Ambedkar’s, the recognition is as strong that ‘homely places’ are incarcerative for the subordinate”.²⁹

Development: Self-Mobilizing Reconstruction

During the Swadeshi Movement, Tagore rejected soliciting British Indian government action, favouring self-mobilizing reconstruction programmes (*Swadeshi Samaj*, 1904) for “self-empowerment” (*Atma Shakti*, 1905).³⁰ Tagore centred the state-society *antinomy*, i.e., the “lifeworld”, abandoning state-centred politics for grassroots institution-building.³¹ Tagore’s core insight was non-coercive “development”. Tagore invoked *networks*, a set of “flowing currents”, not a “fixed or stable object”.³² Similarly, Husserl’s “lifeworld” was never a “whole”, but the “flux” of fragments scattered imperfectly across blurred “temporal frontiers”.³³

A socially conscious Zamindar, Tagore had organized a complete judiciary in the 1890s, a parallel government. The Muslim tenants, the daily religious boundary crossings, fostered Tagore’s convictions of a deep Hindu-Muslim syncretism pervading Indian society among common people. The family estates taught Tagore: (1) Indian self-reliance over British government assistance; and,

29 Menon, 44-52.

30 Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, “Rethinking Tagore on the Antinomies of Nationalism”, *Keynote Address, International Conference on Tagore and Nationalism*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla. 2016.

31 Bhattacharya, 7.

32 Jyotirmaya Sharma. *Hindutva. Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (Delhi: Penguin, 2003), 12.

33 Daniel Christoff. *Husserl ou retour aux choses (Paris : Seghers, 1966)*, 118.

(2) Indian village regeneration (school, road, water supply, and arable land). Tagore said: “If we could free even one village from the shackles of ignorance and helplessness, an ideal for the whole of India would be established.” 1890s small-business experiments seeded the Swadeshi Movement, with turn-of-the-century rural “development” experiments, and the 1921 Institute for Rural Reconstruction inspiring Nehruvian India.³⁴

Tagore: Wrestling Socialism from the Second Circle of Violence and Progress

Tagore grew disillusioned with Zamindari life and British power.³⁵ Tagore embraced “the socialistic ideal of a more equal distribution of wealth”.³⁶ The transnational movement of which the Swadeshi was one of many centres was defined by a “a redemptive and egalitarian utopianism”.³⁷ In Bengal itself, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution unleashed organized dispossession, threatening Zamindari and landed power everywhere, with its new social democratic demand. Worker and peasant insurgency threatened bourgeoisie, who sacrificed aristocracy through land reform. Tagore spurned the Zamindari world of imperial Calcutta, feeling “ashamed of being brought up a parasite”. In 1932, he contrasted the Soviet Union’s “progress” with India’s “barbarism” (especially in universal education).³⁸ The most politically progressive state, in his view, was committed to rapid and ultraviolent industrial “development”. We know, however, that Tagore developed a vision of “development” completely at odds with the second circle of violence and progress.

34 Dutta, 146, 242, 119.

35 Dutta, 17, 425-427, 47, 128-29.

36 Rabindranath Tagore. *Glimpses of Bengal. Selected Letters 1885-1895* (New Delhi: MacMillan, 1997), 102.

37 Prasenjit Duara. “The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism”, *Journal of World History*, 12, 1 (2001), 99-130.

38 Dutta, 298, 354.

As his experiences attest, Tagore was in fact deeply preoccupied with the problem of violence. He visited the trenches of northern France in 1920. The routinized violence reminded him of colonialism. It shattered his private aristocratic utopia: “like a maze of deserted trenches in a shell-ravaged battlefield. . . [my creativity] has lost its enthusiasm for all kinds of aristocratic works that are supremely useless.” It left a traumatic impact. Tagore claimed, in 1936, to have been “born too early for this post-war age of disillusionment”. In 1937, Tagore evoked “the limitless dark”, struggling for a humanist faith. Writing to Gandhi, also in 1937, Tagore endorsed “the culture of the human mind in its broadest sense”.³⁹ He had seen “universal human affinity” while talking to a Bedouin chief near Baghdad.⁴⁰

Husserl praised the “much abused Age of Enlightenment”, and its “zeal” for “reform of education and of all of humanity’s social and political forms of existence”.⁴¹ Tagore, in 1931, following his Soviet visit (of social justice he retained optimism), said despondently: “Freedom of the mind is needed for the reception of truth; terror hopelessly kills it”.⁴² This insight holds a synchronous link with the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate. The European Holocaust, the Soviet Gulag, and India’s Partition, made their worst nightmares become flesh in the normalization of systemic violence. Yet there was hope as well: the Petrograd women’s revolt over bread shortage, Lenin’s ideals of universal healthcare, women’s equality, and universal education. The 1917 Bolshevik revolution gave hope to the world’s majority relegated to subsistence, by decree of Liberal “Nature”, Indian caste, or other hierarchic ontologies.

39 Dutta, 335, 224, 282, 355, 321.

40 Dutta, 321.

41 Edmund Husserl. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 10.

42 Dutta, 297.

Tagore sought to free India's social and economic policy from Empire. He reached old age in the 1930s, amidst – as Austrian legal theorist Hans Kelson (1881-1973) said - “crisis and catastrophe for democracy”.⁴³ The new Soviet modernization paradigm was built ideologically upon a quasi-Nietzschean epistemology. “Objectivity”, the myth of “bourgeois” society, yielded to “advantage” in power struggle, justifying Stalin's food confiscation during the Five-Year Plans, killing millions, in a new “revolutionary ethics” centring the Party. Lying was perfectly justified according to the political ethics of this epistemology. Meanwhile, Tagore feared modern mass politics. Tagore witnessed Bengal's 1930s decline, the self-destructive Swadeshi aftermath, erupting from Hindu-Muslim divide. High-caste Hindus, Bengali social leaders over two centuries, were reduced to one-fifth of the electorate. Hence, Tagore's scepticism regarding numerical democracy (“The Hindus of Bengal, though numerically a minority”, are “superior [to the Muslims] culturally”), and pre-World War I ideal of politics as the art of the noble. Tagore saw the 1932 Communal Award – provoking Gandhi's “fast unto death” – as a “breakdown in cooperation”, and violation of “humanity” and “justice”.⁴⁴

Tagore: The Organicist Temptation

Tagore viewed Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) and Reza Shah Pahlavi (1878-1944) uncertainly between heroes and dictators. Organicism tempted one of modern history's great cosmopolitan humanists, driven by the urgency of self-protection. Mussolini as “man of action” had appeal for Asian populations escaping colonial domination. The “public action” legacy of Swadeshi practices showed Tagore his own error. Regarding 1930s European fascism, Tagore wrote: “If society realizes its unity as embodied in a particular person, then its power will be invincible”. It is the core of *organicism*.

⁴³ Mazower, 1.

⁴⁴ Dutta, 338, 340.

In 1926, Mussolini gave Tagore royal treatment, the Italian media hailing “a symbolic blending of the voice of Rome with that of mystic India”. A choir of 1,000 school children greeted him in the Colosseum. Tagore wrote of “the great Eastern attraction” for “some living genius” and being “drawn to the vision of a creative mind, working in the person of Mussolini, moulding the destiny of Italy”.⁴⁵ In 1924, the French-Jewish scholar Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935), while in Japan, read of Tagore’s enthusiasm for Germany’s spiritual *Zeitgeist* in youth movements. Lévi wrote: “The whole of the world appears to you as ... a dream which you enjoy as a perfect artist”. “Perfection” cannot supersede “legal freedom” for ordinary people, grounding “dignity of life”. When Lévi condemned Tagore’s Brahminism, he referred to false spectre of aristocratic dreams:

“... millions of men have to live as slaves, if some hundreds can reach moksha”. Lévi considered “Brahmin India built on aristocracy”, while “Buddhist India, which tried to build up a democracy, has been defeated and annihilated”.⁴⁶

Tagore apparently listened and gradually adopted the sociological optic of fighting poverty. In 1925, he wrote: “one thing is certain, that the all-embracing poverty which has overwhelmed our country cannot be removed by working with our hands to the neglect of science”. Poverty was “social”, “mental habits producing inertia of intellect and will”.⁴⁷ By the late 1930s, Tagore sharply criticized Indian “communalism” and “casteism”, embodiments of the “cultural paradigm”.⁴⁸

Romain Rolland (1866-1944) met Tagore in Switzerland in 1926, persuading him that, in India as in Italy, “freedom of thought” was suppressed under a “national progress” banner. Tagore had glimpsed the dangers of organicism. In 1925, Italian fascism was

45 Dutta, 267-268, 271.

46 Dutta, 248.

47 Dutta, 247, 262, 261.

48 Bhattacharya, 4.

the “exact counterpart” of extreme Hindu orthodoxy. He compared callous treatment of Untouchables by Brahmins to “Lynching, Fascism, Ku Klux Klanism, and the like”.⁴⁹ Tagore contemplated India through imagined outsider eyes. Yet, visiting Reza Shah Pahlavi’s Iran in 1932, Tagore’s poem honoured the “fusion of East and West”, while celebrating new airplane technology. In 1932, “the modern arts of killing” were decried to a British air-force chaplain in Bagdad, after witnessing Iraqi villages bombarded.⁵⁰ From Mesopotamia to Kurdistan, West Asia was Britain’s testing ground under League of Nations mandate until 1932. Insurrection met army gas attacks in the south, RAF bombing in north and south. Night bombing and delayed action bombs killed countless children. Tagore faced the circle of violence and progress.

Tagore and the Swadeshi Movement

The Swadeshi Movement reshaped India’s modern history as insiders, after decades of exclusion under Empire. Mass mobilization opposed Bengali Partition. By dividing 78 million, a quarter of the Raj’s population, Empire stamped “divide and rule” on the nationalist centre. Lord Curzon decried the “centre through which the Congress Party is manipulated” across “the whole of India”. Bengalis became a minority overnight, outnumbered by Oriya and Hindi speakers. Empire sponsored Muslim communalists against Congress nationalism.⁵¹ This calculatedly inflamed Hindutva counter-reaction, the *Mlechhas* and *Yavanas*, the outcastes and outsiders, in *organicist* definition of the Hindu nation.⁵²

Tagore denounced “the sinister threat of a bisecting blade hissing while being sharpened, ready to divide the one vital sensitive

49 Dutta, 269, 267.

50 Dutta, 316.

51 Chandra et.al., *India’s Struggle for Independence*, 125.

52 Sharma, *Hindutva*, 127.

chord that is to bind our people into a nation".⁵³ The Swadeshi Movement overthrew "divide and rule" through inclusive mass mobilization. Muslim leaders included Syed Haidar Raza and Abdul Rasul. Abdul Rasul condemned "the great disaster, the partition of Bengal", leading "the great national movement known as the Swadeshi movement".⁵⁴ Swadeshi harboured internally *conflicting* tendencies, religious fundamentalist *and* the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhian leadership from 1920 *shifted the region of density* to the Indian nation as a multi-religious democracy. The strategy deliberately marginalized Hindutva elements, urging plural *networks* over unifying organicism.

Swadeshi's deadly ambiguities are catalogued in Tagore's *Home and the World*. Transformed *inside/outside* dynamics, i.e., home and world, had thrown "identity" categories into flux: national, religious, linguistic, and gender. Indians creatively wrested participation from Empire, transforming home forever in the process. Urban and rural Bengalis entered unprecedentedly large-scale political activism. Women left *purdah* in great numbers, remaking private-public life.⁵⁵ Moderate conservatives joined political extremists, terrorists, and socialists, led by journalists, lawyers, and other liberal professions. Means ranged from boycott of Manchester cloth, to ten to twelve thousand passive resisters. The conjunctural grid of institutional proliferation corresponded to a creative upsurge in Indian art, music, and science, as Indian industry expanded apace. It was, like the Egyptian Urabi revolution, a multi-class mass movement and social transfiguration, the rooting of modern independent India through innumerable moments of interconnected public action.

In *Nationalism* (1917), a perennial tension existed between "two alternatives": "fighting one another" and finding "some true basis of reconciliation and mutual help".⁵⁶ Should power sow division

53 Dutta, 340.

54 Chandra et.al., 127.

55 Dutta, 154.

56 Rabindranath Tagore. *Nationalism* (Delhi: Prakash, 2015), 90.

among the masses, or be redistributed to ground a dialogic principle? The Ethic of Reconciliation thus invoked the “social” in the “spirit of cooperation”.⁵⁷ Barriers dividing populations through imagined hierarchy should be dismantled. Untouchability, Tagore wrote, was “one of the darkest evils which degrade us in the estimation of the civilized world”.⁵⁸ We must break down the walls of power between populations, steeping hate and fear over generations. Tagore emphasized education: “the main object of teaching is not to give explanations, but to knock at the doors of the mind”.⁶⁴¹ This Autonomy Principle grounded Tagorian “development”. The “scientific temper” emerged from localized “development” issues, “national” politics and divergent “social imaginaries”. It conforms to Polanyi’s “double movement” and Sen’s “capabilities”, conjunctural moments in the anti-colonial struggle preceding nation-making.

Home and the World as Dialogic Modernism

Home and the World (1916), a World War I novel, confronted horror: Hindu-Muslim riots, demagogic and identity-based violence, terrorist strikes, and colonial violence crushing India’s insurgent populations. It anticipated India’s multi-religious partition. Tagore feared Indian Muslim identification with a global Istanbul-centred Middle East. In a 1924 Bengali newspaper interview, Tagore asked: if a “Mohamedan power” were to “invade India”, would Muslims “stand side by side with their Hindu neighbours”.⁵⁹ Amidst India’s kaleidoscopic freedom struggle, Tagore had evidently lost some self-assurance about Hindu-Muslim “composite culture” from his Zamindari youth. Empire’s divisive propaganda, the deliberate low-intensity war everywhere, gave existential density to a spectre without basis in fact.

57 Bhattacharya, 8.

58 Dutta, 309.

59 B. R. Ambedkar. *Selected Works of DR. B. R. Ambedkar* <http://drambedkarbooks.wordpress.com>, 1885.

In Tagore's *Home and the World*, "modernism" will "burn up the home".⁶⁰ Black moods anticipating worldly destruction attended its writing.⁶¹ Tagore also invoked "modernism" as creative destruction. *Home and the World* addressed the "problem of self-government".⁶² Advocating clear vision ("knowledge" of the world "as it actually is") and humanism ("men just because they are men"), Tagore condemned violent moral passion ("deification", "excitement" and "infatuation higher than truth").⁶³ Tagore fought upon the terrain of competing "social imaginaries". Hindutva fabricated roots for modern scientific knowledge in ancient Hinduism, as Iqbal also did.⁶⁴ *Home and the World* concerns propaganda and organized lies.⁶⁵ Tagore wrote: "So long as we are impervious to truth", and are "moved by some hypnotic stimulus, we must know that we lack the capacity for self-government". He added: "We need some imaginary ghost to terrorize us", suggesting the addictive quality of coercive "social imaginaries" for ruling orders. Tagore believed the "progress of truth thrusts aside veil after veil of obscuring custom". Still, for Tagore, truth as "inner being" contrasts with "science" in a traditional duality.⁶⁶

Home and World confronts *inside/out* anxieties: "what a fearsome thing results when a machine apes a man".⁶⁷ The West has a *double*-role: "humanity must be grateful to you for your science. But you have exploited those who are helpless and humiliated those who are unfortunate with this gift." Tagore's reaction to Gandhi's comments on the 1934 Bihar earthquake (a punishment upon high-caste Hindus for crimes against Untouchables) embraces the

60 Rabindranath Tagore. *The Home and the World* (Delhi: Rupa, 2002), 27.

61 Dutta, 193.

62 Tagore, *Home*, 30-31.

63 Tagore, *Home*, 30-31.

64 Dutta, 93.

65 Tagore, *Home*, 18.

66 Tagore, *Home*, 30-31, 46, 54.

67 Tagore, *Home*, 195.

causal principle: “anything more opposed to the scientific outlook it would be difficult to imagine”.⁶⁸ The “scientific temper” was to serve “developmental” ends. Tagore pioneered the “antinomies of nationalism”, a dialectical vision of “development” centring the “lifeworld”.⁶⁹

In *Home and the World*, Nikhilesh, Tagore’s cosmopolitan ideal, recognizes his own tyranny. Nikhilesh’s unconsciously fixed image of modern liberation pressures his wife Bimala to enter public life as a free being and modern woman. He wants to know who Bimala “is” behind “convention”. Nikhilesh overlooks “phenomenological” complexity, gradually losing Bimala’s trust. The *antinomies* of modernizing societies, Nikhilesh learns, are resolved only by sincerely listening, or empathically sharing incommensurable experience. Nikhilesh and Bimala represent inter-perspectival encounters, unknowable through any prefabricated template. Tagore’s solution – essentially irreducible intimacy - provides no blueprint, but a message. “Freedom” must be rooted in “small things”, which “with so much lightness” must “weigh you down”.⁷⁰ Tagore emphasised the urgent need of many voices, the power of storytelling as one fundamental need of masses in the modern world. No single voice can relate the stories of the people, no unifying ontology can define the identities of all individuals within any group.

Tagore’s later illegitimate appropriation by Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906-73), the supreme guide of the Hindutva RSS, is sad.⁷¹ The multiple and conflicting components in Tagore’s evolving thought, related to his lifelong institution-building projects, require analysis as a landmark “scientific temper” vision. Tagore’s inspiration reached to the heart of Europe’s Jewish tragedy, in this sense touching Husserl directly. In the 1942 Warsaw Ghetto, a

68 Dutta, 300-301, 314.

69 Bhattacharya, 7-14.

70 Tagore, *Home*, 30, 202-203.

71 Jyotirmaya Sharma. *Terrifying Vision. M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS and India* (Delhi: Penguin, 2007), 40.

doomed orphanage performed Tagore's *The Post Office*, that the children might "learn to serenely accept the angel of death".⁷²

⁷² Dutta, 3.

CHAPTER 5

Bhim Rao Ambedkar and Alexandre Koyré: Destruction of the Cosmos in the Second Circle of Violence and Progress

Home, Minorities, Information War: The Structuralist Revolution

Russian Jewish Koyré, of the Azov Sea, became a Socialist Revolutionary, amidst industrial strikes, peasant riots, university demonstrations, and assassination. With the 1905 Russo-Japanese War and Bloody Sunday, military support bolstered industrial and peasant insurgencies. Serfs, ensnared in the Lords' will and bargaining power, shifted from creation myth (labour is Eden's curse) to human creative power. Creative labour power was a common site of reflection for Ambedkar and Koyré. Like Ambedkar, Koyré distinguished a secular "social imaginary" and "cosmic ontology". Teenaged Koyré joined the failed 1905 revolution and was imprisoned. The holy czar executed and exiled thousands, particularly Jewish socialists, many migrating to Palestinian farming communes (*kibbutzim*). Imprisoned, Koyré studied Husserl's 1901 *Logical Investigations*. He thus encountered the "scientific temper" as phenomenological problem. Koyré and contemporaries (i.e., Bachelard) *secularized* phenomenology into

a *sociological* optic synchronically with Ambedkar's reconstructed "lifeworld". "Phenomenology" is the politics of *home*, of negotiating intimate meanings and conflicts: not the absolute, but the "double movement". Koyré's 1908 expulsion from homeland was followed by a struggle to rationalize the social life of modern communities.

Koyré confronted the public power of the Lie. Atrocities met ideological myth. Minority politics afflicted polyglot Eastern Europe, Land Empires-cum-nation-states upon a multi-ethnic patchwork. A hundred thousand Jews inside Romania suddenly became stateless under ethnic nationalist citizenship laws. With Red Vienna's destruction, a Catholic autocracy was established. Greece's population increased, with the 1923 forced population transfers, by a quarter, under the strain of mass refugee resettlement. Thousands of Jews in the Weimar and Third Republics were locked in detention centres, in a permanent refugee crisis.¹ The Ethic of Reconciliation in the Indian freedom struggle responded to the conjunctural pressures where *imaginary* and *material* are one in institution-building, Ambedkar being among its chief architects.

In 1912, Husserl refused Koyré's Gottingen University doctoral thesis, quarrelling over what constitutes the "purest" scientific phenomena. Koyré's first wave Structuralism saw *relations between elements* rather than finished *wholes*. Ambedkar and Koyré, humanists *and* structuralists, preceded the Heideggerian Second Structuralist wave. They professed the social centrality of critical *communication*, before the "linguistic turn" reduced the "lifeworld" hermeneutically to text. Ambedkar criticized "inevitability", the pre-made world, affirming pluralism and options, the post-Darwinian world where the future is unwritten. Ambedkar wrote: "being in communication with one another" means "a society continues to exist".² Caste, by excluding communication between "incommensurable" groups, ceases to be a "society". The "social" had an ethical, egalitarian

1 Mazower, 43.

2 Bhim Rao Ambedkar. *Annihilation of Caste. The Annotated Critical Edition* (Delhi: Navayana, 2014), 244.

and *communicative* meaning, corrupted by the centuries of *silence* in internalized caste oppression. Silence was oppression of the objective possibility of human communication. In “Reflections on the Lie” (1943), Koyré similarly invoked new totalitarian regimes systemically crushing dissent - the dialogic basis for society’s radical grassroots self-transformation. Communication never occurs in a void of multiple individuals. Electoral choices and decisions in daily life require conjunctural institutions to function. Tax/ownership or government/market are circulatory constructs, neither having genetic priority. This is the beginning of the “institutional capabilities” insight. Ambedkar and Koyré turned the Autonomy of Science debate in a sociological direction, away from Husserlian and Tagorian metaphysics.

In Ambedkar’s structuralist methodology, caste was not “an isolated unit by itself”, but “with definite relations to, the [whole] system of caste”.³ In the Sanskritization concept, he pioneered structuralism: everything was “relations” (inside/out; centre/margin; purity/impurity; mimesis, and gradation), while the “thing-itself” was *empty*. Ambedkar elaborated a *networks* social theory of identity: “what one is as a person is what one is as associated with others”.⁴ This core structuralist principle underpinned Durkheim’s *Elementary Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), where, beyond relations, no “essential identity” exists. It reappeared in Saussure’s 1916 theory of “difference”.⁵ Why were similar ideas articulated contemporaneously in the Indian freedom struggle? Certainly, India has greater intellectual antecedents than the West in Buddhist tradition. The nexus uniting parallel histories, however, was the conjunctural political crises of Empire and the second circle of violence and progress. This nexus defines the “scientific temper”

3 Bhim Rao Ambedkar. *Selected Works of DR. B. R. Ambedkar*. <http://drambedkarbooks.wordpress.com>, 600.

4 Arun P. Mukherjee. “B. R. Ambedkar, John Dewey, and the Meaning of Democracy”, *New Literary History*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2009, 345-370.

5 Saussure, 98-103.

debate, in which Buddhist thought came to play an important role in conceiving a “social imaginary”. Inequality is psychologically and institutionally self-perpetuating, but never “inevitable” – it is a matter of differing horizons, a policy outcome.

Divide and Rule, Minority Politics, Traditional Orders: Phenomenological Modernism

Empire’s 1870-1880 colonial census created “minority politics”, as Muslims, Dalits, and others experienced new mobilization pressures.⁶ The poisonous entanglement of peoples’ rights and minority rights was harvested from the existential crisis of traditional orders. Empire deployed “identity” to weaken India’s post-1920 national movement, labelling this “defence of minorities”.⁷ The colonial census triggered demographic anxieties, “Hindus” collectively adopting Mughal, and then British, given names - having, before, foregrounded *jati* or caste identity. Names metaphorically invoke “social imaginaries”, Ambedkar suggested: “Because we have this misfortune of calling ourselves Hindus, we are treated thus”. He revolutionized the *circle of moral consideration* by revolting against a discursive universe: “I will not die a Hindu, for this is in my power”.⁸ The “scientific temper” articulates *public action* as the creative power to transform meaning and values.

Dalits experienced Empire’s worst brutalities. India’s colonial wealth drainage caused famines, where millions died, while Empire exported food to England.⁹ The Mahars had already lived in extreme poverty, upon a derisible village income, and with hereditary land subdivided to insignificance.¹⁰ The “scientific temper”, for

6 Christophe Jaffrelot. *Dr Ambedkar. Leader intouchable et père de la Constitution indienne* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000), 94.

7 Chandra et.al., 408.

8 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 55, 52.

9 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 58.

10 Jaffrelot, 52.

Ambedkar, was intimately linked to an emancipatory “development” vision. Escaping misery provoked the great Mahar industrial exodus, a labour migration to railroad construction and Bombay dock work.¹¹ A pauperized Mahar mass, explosively, combined with a modernized Mahar elite among government functionaries and military officers. Railroad functionaries learned English, sending their children to industry-related schools, shattering the Varna code. Technological revolutions creatively destroyed “lifeworlds”, for good and ill. Ambedkar’s father was a Mahar soldier, bringing him into this revolutionary network system.

Polanyi’s “double movement” is the crisis of *home*. Ambedkar re-imagined the politics of “home” beyond homogenous belonging in cohabitated differences. Any “assimilation” of Dalits into a high-caste Hindu nation was coercive, because hierarchy was fundamental to Hindu scriptures and social habits. Bhaktism had urged self-purification as the precondition for brotherhood, i.e., *Chomhamela*. The 1920s Sanskritization movement urged that Dalits not drink alcohol, nor eat meat, to “purify” themselves, modelled on higher caste. Ambedkar saw this as fruitless: illusory self-emancipation is self-enslavement. A bid for freedom embraces unconscious hierarchic obsession, retaining the margin/centre dynamic, “home” at the caste summit. Ambedkar questioned why individuals might choose oppression based on indoctrination. Ambedkar and Koyré envisioned a “phenomenological” modernism, a long public process of education and activism, and not an external modernism forcibly imposing its fixed worldview upon traditional communities.

The Interwar “Inevitability” Crisis: Ethics as Dialogic Rationality

Modernity, then, is not “inevitability”. We enter the second circle of violence and progress. “Inevitability” – religious fate, Liberal “nature”, Comtean “determinism”, or Marxist-Leninist statism

11 Jaffrelot, 53.

– is no ethical perspective. Ethics explains reasons for action, against possible objections. Obeying unconditional commands is not ethical. The “inevitability” issue was central to the “scientific temper” debate. Against Husserlian phenomenology, Bachelard cited “the principle of division within reason itself”, as the “opening of rationalism”.¹² The pain in Ambedkar’s confrontation with the social problem of knowledge shows its visceral political context for millions. Through British legislation, Ambedkar attended school outside, under the hot South Asian sun on a gunnysack, divided from higher-caste classmates, “bodies trained in habits of exquisite personal cleanliness” (Annie Besant, *Indian Review*, 1909).¹³ Indebted to Empire for education, Ambedkar revolted against appealing to universal justice, invoking Deweyan Pragmatism.

The Great Depression refuted laissez-faire economics. World War I destroyed the secular myth of “inevitable” progress, provoking religious revival from Europe to India and the Middle East. In 1928, al-Banna founded Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, drawing on Afghani, responding to atheistic socialism as the Middle East’s dominant ideology. Islam was reconstructed as a perfect, all-encompassing system, embodied in an elite vanguard. Dewey’s *Common Faith* argued: “the Great War ... has led to a revival of the theology of corruption, sin, and the need for supernatural redemption”. The “war, jealousy, and fear that dominate the relations of national states”, the “futility in politics”, and the “oppression” of “economic activities” has “provoked” the “conclusion” that “the only recourse is to supernatural aid”.¹⁴ Dewey contrastingly concluded: “all the positive values which are prized ... have, after all, emerged from the very scene of human associations of which it is possible

12 Gaston Bachelard. *Le Nouvel Esprit Scientifique* (Paris: Quadrige, 2009), 24.

13 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 59.

14 John Dewey. *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 74.

to paint so black a picture".¹⁵ Technological revolutions produce emancipatory and oppressive functions through myriad institutions underpinning the possibility of organized public action.

Ambedkar initially analysed caste in 1916, at Columbia University, New York, inspired by Dewey's evolutionary concept of iterative change: humans have neither immutable essence nor *perfect* identity, but ceaselessly re-constitute through environmental interaction. The "lifeworld", Dewey wrote, was "the realm of generation and decay", "infected with nonbeing".¹⁶ In Dewey's 1929 statement, years before Jean Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1944), Ambedkar perceived an affinity with Buddhist philosophy. A theory of "capabilities" emerged at multiple points across the transnational vista. Ambedkar rejected the Tagorian absolute, an "Indian ancestry", "deep in [his] being", the "legacy of philosophy" in "our harmony with all things".¹⁷ Whose harmony? Ambedkar dissented from India's Congress-led national movement: "whether the Congress is fighting for freedom has very little importance as compared to the question for whose freedom".¹⁸ Ambedkar rejected freedom as a single, unrolling force equally and "inevitably" pervading humanity (i.e., as in Hegel), seeing multiple conflicting freedoms, each requiring negotiation through secular changes in social power distribution (i.e., redistributive taxation, parties, unions, press). This "scientific temper" insight figured importantly in the Nehru era experiment.

Ambedkar: Reconstructing Buddhism for India's Transnational Left

Ambedkar scientifically analysed Indian history: "Much of the ancient history of India ... has been made mythology". It must

15 Dewey, *CF*, 74.

16 John Dewey, *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 367.

17 Tagore, *Omnibus*, 122.

18 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 43.

be “dug out of the debris which the Brahmin writers have heaped upon [it]”, to reveal the “underlying substance”. It is a “history of class war”.¹⁹ Purity linked Hindu religious power to social hierarchy, guarded by the Brahmins.

Ambedkar demystified sacred knowledge, or “the falsity ... that has exalted religious sanction to the position of scientific explanation”. He condemned the “fallacy which regards the caste system as inevitable”. He saw incommensurable principles: “the principle of inequality which is the basis of the caste system had become well established” when the “Buddha carried on a determined and a bitter fight.”²⁰ Ambedkar revived Buddhism in India as a militant democratic and secular tradition, a plural “social imaginary” to escape the assimilation conundrum. It was a “social imaginary” because it partook of a wider transnational conjuncture plateau where “imaginary” and “material” are one.

Ambedkar’s Buddha confirms modernization as varying ensembles of cultural and intellectual *components*. The Buddha was the “first Social Reformer”, instigating the “history of Social Reform in India”. The Buddha’s “view is in consonance with science”.²¹ *Anatta* means seeing objectively without projections, which Ambedkar fused with the Deweyan “scientific temper”.²² Buddha, a revolutionary seeking to destroy Caste, was thwarted by a thousand yearlong Brahmin counter-revolution. The Buddha, however, incarnates contemporary political ideals: “As to Dictatorship, the Buddha would have none of it. He was born a democrat, and he died a democrat.”²³ The Buddha represented an inclusive *circle of moral consideration* (freemen, slaves, women, foreigners, etc.), not fixed by God. Ambedkar’s Buddha corresponded to a

19 Ambedkar, *SW*, 2311-2312, 2329.

20 Ambedkar, *SW* 610, 2366.

21 Ambedkar, *SW*, 2324, 392.

22 Walpola Rahula. *What the Buddha taught* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1974), 66.

23 Ambedkar, *SW*, 587.

revolution in Indian *labour* politics. World War I spurred India's transnational Left, in a mass uprising dormant since the Swadeshi twilight. Exiled British Indian Army soldiers, land-hungry Punjabi peasants, populated the waterfront of Oakland's Mission Street in California, communicating revolutionary socialist ideologies back to India, from the working-class ghettos of Market Street. The British Indian secretary of state sought to curb these flows, limiting worker migration to Fiji, fearing insurgent India's "contamination by socialist ideas", and "infection with ideas of liberty", as thousands left home driven by economic hardship.²⁴

A paradigm shift in the meaning of human identity was linked imaginatively to mobilization lines. The "unity of the self" was central to the 20th century "scientific temper" debate, from Mach's non-identity, to Afghani's collective self as arbitrary aesthetic creation. Following the *Anatta* doctrine, Ambedkar highlighted one cause of human misery in "the delusion of the self". This contrasts with Tagore and Husserl, for whom "supreme identity" was paramount. When human "eyes have been opened", they see themselves as a "tiny part of a measureless whole", being thereby freed from "desire for a future life".²⁵ Koyré, similarly, found no "pure" foundation, the "substance" of religiously invested Newtonian space, instead seeing "the infinite uncreated nothingness".²⁶ The mathematization of the universe meant abandoning illusions of qualitative hierarchy dividing human beings.²⁷

In the spirit of the Second Enlightenment, Koyré and Ambedkar both embraced emptiness as cosmopolitan ground. How can emptiness unite humankind? Yet, the Buddha taught this by the River Neranjara and Isipatana Deer Park near Benares. Ambedkar's post-traditional Buddhism provided an affirmative tradition for

24 Chandra et.al., 146-7.

25 Ambedkar, *SW*, 583-4.

26 Koyré, *Universe*, 275.

27 Alexandre Koyré. *Etudes d'histories de la pensée scientifique* (Saint-Amand : Gallimard, 1985), 57.

Untouchables, a narrative to escape Hinduism's "chamber of horrors".²⁸ He evacuated Buddhism of certain features: for example, the recluse Pukkusati, killed by a wild cow, and attaining the fourth stage of Nirvana, beyond "impurity", now simply died, and fertilized the natural environment with his physical remains.²⁹ It was "the regeneration of matter and not in the rebirth of the soul".³⁰ Yet, Ambedkar argued that "religion is necessary for a free society". Religion participated in a "social imaginary". In a post-traditional Navayana Buddhism, Ambedkar distinguished "religion" from "dhamma", following the "lifeworld" in Dewey's *Common Faith* (1934).³¹ If "man and morality is not the centre of religion", it is "cruel superstition". The "function of Religion is to reconstruct the world and make it happy", and "not to explain its origin or its end". Everything is subject to "inquiry", "examination", and "causation", and "nothing is permanent."³² Dewey rejected "man as the apex of the whole scheme of things".³³

Ambedkar and Koyré: Confronting "Inevitability" in Organicist Politics

Perfect unity for Hindutva is *Advaita*, fusing light and darkness, affluent and impoverished, in a unified cosmic stream. Only Hindu *dharma*, based on the Mahabharata, can realize the "perfection" of "stateless society". Golwalker, supreme RSS guide, rejected the right of Dalits to convert to Buddhism or Islam to escape caste. Until the ancient Hindu ideal of "stateless society" is realized, society can legitimately oppress dissent.³⁴ European exiles, breaking the

28 Ambedkar, *SW*, 4434.

29 Rahula, 7-8.

30 Ambedkar, *SW*, 392.

31 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 139.

32 Ambedkar, *SW*, 578.

33 Dewey, *CF*, 53.

34 Sharma, *TV*, 9-10

law to engage in politics, crossing hazardous borders, mostly East European Jews, similarly experienced the weakness of fact against prejudice, in rising anti-Semitism, racist pseudo-science, and information war. In India, religious fundamentalist parties surged after 1937: the paramilitary RSS, founded in 1925, represented Hindu nationhood, *Punyabhū* (Holy Land), claiming roots in immutable religious source.³⁵ Its one-party politics, inspired by European Fascism, spread in Indian organicism.³⁶ Europe and India were transnationally linked in organicism. Indian Muslims and Christians, centuries deep, became “aliens” overnight. This explains the non-negotiable centrality of secular citizenship to the “scientific temper”, for Ambedkar as for Nehru.

Structuralism and phenomenology proposed new modes of understanding home and collective social life. Following the 1932 Poona Pact, Ambedkar embraced a “phenomenological” analysis of Hindu caste. Gandhi rejected separate Dalit electorates to preserve Hindu cohesion, while Ambedkar rejected Dalit belonging to Hinduism as prescribed by scripture. Ambedkar comparatively analysed hierarchic worldviews phenomenologically, as internalized upon an unequal socio-economic order. Ambedkar saw “a complete analogy between the Jewish Problem and the problem of the Untouchables”. However: “The Jews and the Gentiles are separated by an antagonism of creeds. The Jewish creed is opposed to that of the Gentile creed”. By contrast, “Hindus and the Untouchables ... have a common creed and observe the same cults.”³⁷ Dalit subordination is internal to the Hindu discursive universe. The Dalit can be liberated only by leaving Hinduism.

Dewey saw the “purity” of “being” as a bid to restore traditional elite power. His “human abode”, i.e., “lifeworld”, excluded final definition of a human being. “Meaning” exists imaginatively in

35 Sharma, *TV*, 58

36 Chandra et.al., 427.

37 Ambedkar, *SW*, 3949.

ever-changing possibilities for growth.³⁸ The dynamic potential of scientific inquiry to ceaselessly discover new knowledge and pursue ideals, while building reserves of experiential knowledge for improving social life, concerns multiple human horizons conditioned by technological revolutions, i.e., networks. Ambedkar also envisioned societies, not as metaphysical wholes, but as multiple interactive networks. If a “whole” exists, Dewey wrote, it is “imaginary”, not “ontological”.³⁹ Ambedkar reproduced this in his 1936 *Annihilation of Caste*, as he founded India’s Independent Labour Party: “nowhere is human society one single whole. It is always plural. In the world of action, the individual is one limit and society the other”.⁴⁰ Dalit identity was not ontologically fixed, but social and plural:

“The questions to be asked in determining what is an ideal society are: How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared by the groups? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of associations? Are the forces that separate groups and classes more numerous than the forces that unite them? ... The strength of a society depends upon the presence of points of contact.”⁴¹

Ambedkar grasped the essence of social revolutions in communication, not merely forcible power redistribution. He articulated the core of the “hegemonic” problem, as few have done since, for societies everywhere.

Ambedkar and the Autonomy of Science: “Capabilities” Opposed to “Inevitability” as Socialist Doctrine

Ambedkar upheld communicative reason to build a democratic society, informed by secular education. He wrote: “Two things [Untouchables] must strive for are education and spread of

38 Dewey, *CF*, 60-87

39 Dewey, *CF*, 18.

40 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 278.

41 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 279.

knowledge. The power of the privileged classes rests upon lies which are sedulously propagated among the masses.”⁴² Disillusionment over censorship, torture, frame-ups, and mock trials, provoked questions about universal justice and objective truth during 1930s Soviet trials based on phantasmal imaginings. Ambedkar recognized a widespread problem in the need to adapt modern mass educational systems to the needs of a democratic society. Intergenerational mobility requires not only creative training in social service to the general population, but corresponding increase in the depth of individuality. The flux of circumstance will not permit any fixed metaphysical template grounded in exclusivity and intolerance.

Dewey’s 1929 affirmation of “practice”, “matter”, and the “body” over “enduring being” inspired a broader anti-metaphysical movement.⁴³ Ambedkar and Koyré belonged to this. Deweyan “social efficiency” emphasised “[developing] the capacity of an individual ... to choose and to make his own career”, a “principle violated in the caste system”, which appoints “tasks to individuals in advance”. Ambedkar reproduced the “social efficiency” argument: “Industry is never static. It undergoes rapid and abrupt changes. With such changes, an individual must be free to change his occupation”.⁴⁴ The catalytic effect of technological revolutions and markets is to multiply occupational options, a source of enslavement or emancipation depending on “development” paths. This certainly informed Nehru’s view in post-independence.

Ambedkar’s “development” sees ordinary worldly action adopt a religious quality. Dewey invoked science rooted in the existential “crises of birth, puberty, illness, death, war, famine, plague”. Rejecting “purity”, he affirmed “making and doing [relating] to livelihood”, i.e., “development”, including “industry, politics, [and] the fine arts”.⁴⁵ The “democratic ideal” required scientific education,

42 Ambedkar, *SW*, 996-7.

43 Dewey, *Philosophy*, 361.

44 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 234-235.

45 Dewey, *Philosophy*, 361, 363, 365, 358.

the “community of causes and consequences in which we, together with those not yet born, are enmeshed”. This concerned “the widest and deepest symbol of the mysterious totality of being the imagination calls the universe”. Its essence is “communication”, the ground for “verifiable intellectual support”.⁴⁶ Dewey’s 1934 argument corresponded to the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate. Ambedkar similarly emphasised “being in communication with one another” as “existentially” defining a society. Fixed labour corresponded to the ancient curse of the Fall, or the fourfold Varna of primeval sacrifice, whether in the organicism of the Confederate States of America or a Hindutva vision of a modernized Varna system. Labouring populations were forced to silently accept their place without questioning organized power, under pain of punishment and death.

Ambedkar knew capitalism coerced labour, but “the greatest evil in the industrial system [was] not so much poverty [as] so many persons having callings which make no appeal to [them]”.⁴⁷ Ambedkar placed supreme emphasis on the human power of *choice*, the kernel of the “scientific temper” debate. Colonialism modernized caste into a scripture-based labour regime, serving capitalism, with British administrators using the *Manusmriti* to build India’s legal system, i.e., Manu, “the first Man”. Ambedkar rejected “purity”, unmasking a social construct based on “the division of labourers”, in the undelivered 1936 Lahore Conference speech, “Annihilation of Caste”. It was cancelled by the Arya Samaj, who wished to reform Hinduism through the “purified” teachings and ritual practices of the Vedas, the uncorrupted purity prior to a “thousand-year Muslim invasion”. An early member, Bhai Parmanand (1876-1947), was the first advocate of an Islamic state, in 1905: “the territory beyond Sindh should be united with Afghanistan ... into a great Musulman Kingdom”.⁴⁸ The interpenetration of top-down

46 Dewey, *CF*, 85.

47 Mukherjee, “Ambedkar”, 19.

48 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 269, 115, 191.

colonial and bottom-up civil society discourses is again manifest in the densification of fictional wholes.

Hindutva was a counter-Enlightenment “hegemonic” bid within India’s nascent nationalism. *Bande Mataram*, from Bankim Chandra Chatterji’s (1838-94) novel *Anandamath* (“The Abbey of Bliss”, 1882), became the national theme song. Hindutva followed Orientalists William Jones and Max Muller’s Sanskrit researches, declaring Vedic glories lost under Islamic invasion. The “natural order” of Indian caste – the “greatest institution the Lord gave to man”, and “premised on diversity” - provided the existential solution to modernity’s levelling meaninglessness, showing individuals’ “true nature”, *prakriti* (Swami Vivekananda).⁴⁹ It targeted Muslims, invoking “a thousand years of Muslim repression” in a doubling of colonial imaginaries.⁵⁰ Lokamanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Aurobindo Ghosh resisted ideologies “alien to our faith” (i.e. social rights of the person, gender equality).⁵¹

Ambedkar affirmed “components” over the “whole”, another key insight of the “scientific temper”. The Vedas and the Shastras, Ambedkar argued, rife with absurdities and inequities, were ill-suited to India’s present life: “Hindus must consider whether they should conserve the whole of their social heritage or select what is helpful [to] transmit to future generations”. He cited Dewey: a society is “responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better society”.⁵² Ambedkar therefore argued: (1) “development” should be achieved, not by coercion, but by providing individuals with choice of education and vocation; (2) some societies waste individual potential (i.e., forced hereditary occupations), others flourish in liberating individual potential to learn and grow. Home is “capabilities”, where human meaning is an open horizon.

49 Sharma, *Hindutva*, 93.

50 Wolpert, 71.

51 Jaffrelot, 182.

52 Mukherjee. “Ambedkar”, 4.

The core dynamic of the “scientific temper” is self-organizing civil society. Dewey invoked a shifted “social center of gravity” involving “enormous expansion of associations”, including “educational, political, economic, philanthropic, and scientific”, which “occurred independently of any religion”. A multi-centred civil society, un beholden to *one* “hegemonic” truth, defines the post-traditional society. The “lifeworld” is radically transformed “by political and economic changes” following “from applications of science”.⁵³ An overlap with Polanyi’s 1935 “scientific temper” principle becomes manifest in Ambedkar’s plural institutions as the guarantee of individual freedom:

“There is safety, if no definite guidance, in the multiplicity of views expressed by different educated classes drawn from different strata ... there is no danger of society being misguided or misdirected by the views of one single educated class drawn from one single class of society”.⁵⁴

This communicative principle opposes the unifying “cultural paradigm”. Chaturvarnya, Hinduism’s discursive universe of caste, “must fail for the very reason for which Plato’s republic must fail”, that “the qualities of individuals are so variable”.⁵⁵ The right to criticism was essential: “In Parliamentary Government every citizen has a right to criticize the restraint on liberty imposed by the Government. ... In Dictatorship, you have only the duty to obey but no right to criticise it”.⁵⁶ Ambedkar demanded *inclusive* institutions, calling for an “era of equality” at the 1927 Mahad Conference: “all public sectors, the army, the police, and commerce, must be opened to us”.⁵⁷ He compared the 1789 Estates General at Versailles (which legally abolished feudalism) to the elimination of the Caste system. The poorest and most marginalized groups,

53 Dewey, *CF*, 38-9, 62.

54 Ambedkar, *SW*, 2489-90.

55 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 267.

56 Ambedkar, *SW*, 588.

57 Jaffrelot, 87.

skinning dead cows, because of caste-birth, was seen by many Dalits as a cosmic curse. Ambedkar deemed this obligation a social convention, not a cosmic reality, for (following Dewey) the “whole is imaginary”.⁵⁸ It is “associated activity”, networks built on “communication”, that “binds and makes a society”.⁵⁹ This implies a spirituality in the *conjunctural*. Circumstances of birth, health, and education (i.e. goods and services) in turn depend upon transport networks, communications systems, energy supplies and legal arrangements (i.e. infrastructure), making the *mythic* isolation of “private earnings” from the social whole a falsehood and impossibility. Ambedkar rejected *ontological individualism*, while affirming *ethical individualism*. Criticizing the lies of capitalism, he also exploded a central lie of the second circle of violence and progress in the “individual” as merely a “bourgeois” construction.

Ambedkar: Dewey and the Mirror of the American Civil War

Dewey abstracted the American Civil War experience, in which his father was a Union soldier. The American Civil War (1861-65) transfigured human existential meaning in death rituals, undermining the dogmatic human/animal boundary of traditional belief. Battle survivors shovelled corpses into pits “in bunches, just like dead chickens.” The pre-Civil War American ‘art of dying’ had given death transcendent meaning: “death is not to be regarded as a mere event in our history ... Death fixes our state.”⁶⁰ Mass mobilized armies broke 19th century military convention: “the war generated a mass mobilization of common citizens and forces of unprecedented size”. These “three million ... were not trained professionals, schooled in drill and manoeuvre, but overwhelmingly

58 Dewey, *CF*, 18.

59 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 244.

60 D.G. Faust. *The Republic of Suffering. Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 16, 56, 23.

volunteers with little military knowledge or experience". It also revolutionized labour and posed alternative "development" paths, a technological landmark in mass military violence. Railroads and industrial capacity facilitated army resupply and redeployment, "extending the duration of the war and the killing". The Civil War experience forced every American's humanity into question. The war ended slavery, revolutionizing the hitherto Eurocentric Enlightenment concepts freedom, citizenship, and equality in U.S. history's conflicting potential paths.⁶¹ The war threw up the problem of inclusive humanity, and, ultimately, home – could African Americans be at home in America? An expanded circle of moral consideration was central.

Black Union Army soldiers embodied existential destruction of the Confederate worldview, which arbitrarily relegated non-whites to a non-human category. The 1864 Fort Pillow massacre (nearly two-thirds of the three hundred black soldiers were massacred) attest to an arbitrary worldview invested in sanctified violence. The Confederacy professed a divinely ordained modern slave economy, for massive wealth production, its ideological enemy post-1789 egalitarianism. Dewey had declared the "democratic ideal" incompatible with the "spiritual aristocracy" of "saved and damned". New "secular interests and activities" which have "grown up outside of organized religions and are independent of their authority" provide "the opportunity for expansion of [the best ethical] qualities on a new basis and with a new outlook".⁶² The labour of slaves, like Untouchables, was highly valued, needed, used, and exploited. Their lives and deaths bordered on parity with the last mosquito crushed.

Mahar villages allocated occupations – messengers, guardians, cleaners – according to caste. The regime was built upon a purity-impurity dynamic, related to carcass removal, forbidding interdining and intermarriage. It extended to "wells, schools, buses, railway

61 Faust, 156, 76, 53, 89, 19.

62 *CF*, 83-84.

compartments”.⁶³ A diversity of labour-related secular interests, outside of the life-governing rules of the traditional religious sphere, i.e., Mahars in the British army in the 1890s, undermined caste norms.⁶⁴ Ambedkar’s “scientific temper” meant the “attitude of each individual is democratic”, “prepared to treat every other individual as his equal”. The equal consideration of interests is a “mental and moral disposition”.⁶⁵ Such “constitutional morality” is not “natural”, it must be “cultivated” and “learned”.⁶⁶

Ambedkar saw the American Civil War mirroring India’s possible futures. He wrote: “What happened to the Negroes after the Civil War was over? ... The Whites in the South had no intention to admit the Negroes to equal citizenship. Disenfranchisement ... was undertaken as a solemn duty both by the State Governments of the South as well as by the Whites of the Southern States”.⁶⁷ In modern citizenship, nothing is natural in the human status, or inclusion within moral concern. Institutions – from slavery, to gender subordination, to eating meat – are social, not natural, and therefore subject to ethical investigation in rational view of a *circle of moral consideration*. Jyotirao Phule (1827-90), Maharashtrian anti-caste social reformer and mentor to Ambedkar, had compared Untouchable experience to the American Civil War. Changing the laws is the first step in a prolonged “hegemonic” revolutionization of the “social imaginary”.

Ambedkar and Koyré: Inside the Second Circle of Violence and Progress

Koyré and Ambedkar were socialists. Doctrinally based in Marx and Engels, the collectivist movement had its event-genesis in the

63 *SW*, 4321

64 Jaffrelot, 55.

65 Ambedkar, *SW*, 2855.

66 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 43-45.

67 Ambedkar, *SW*, 4301-2.

1871 Paris Commune, and a larger structural system failure: the French and American Revolutionary legacies (public opinion, reason, and the rights of man) proved incapable of timely adaptation to 19th century technological revolutions. *Institutional-capabilities* failure was the origin of modern socialism, emblemized in the 1917 Russian Revolution (collectivism, planned economy, and social equality), then in European post-war welfare states and the American New Deal (1933-36). The conjunctural phenomenon requires no “inevitability” thesis, in which (as in Arthur Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon*) “the Party is always right”. Koyré and Ambedkar were troubled by the autocratic dogmatism in the Communist Party, with its austere, top-down command structure and suppression of dissent. Class struggle required an alternative “social imaginary”.

Ambedkar envisioned liberating individual creative potential, making him a legalist: “Constitutionalism is the best form of government, individually and collectively”.⁶⁸ Rejecting *ontological* individualism, he embraced *ethical* individualism. Yet democracy’s guarantee is not law, but the “lifeworld”: “Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience”.⁶⁹ Ambedkar retained core Marxist elements, invoking “a conflict of interest between class and class”. For the “good of society”, “abolishing private property” was a “necessity”. Ambedkar considered these scientifically legitimate and consistent with Buddhist teachings. The “ends” were “common”, the “differences” were “about the means”.⁷⁰ Ambedkar advocated democratizing industrial production by eliminating the structural capitalist hierarchy. Capitalism and market are not synonymous. By definition, capitalism is a regime where labour is exploited by capitalists for gain. Ambedkar envisioned institutional reconstruction that labour might live as citizens rather than commodities. Such power sharing is elementary to the very premise of democracy.

68 Jaffrelot, 138.

69 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 260.

70 Ambedkar, *SW*, 580-585.

Ambedkar wept alone in a Baroda park, upon returning to Maharashtra in 1917, as a lawyer. Just as Bolshevism triumphed, Ambedkar was refused lodging, even while trying to pass for a Parsee, because of caste restrictions. His crime was pursuing knowledge – hadn't the Shudra Shambuka been decapitated by Rama, in the holy scriptures, for doing so against *dharmā*?⁷¹ Learning had changed nothing, Ambedkar remained ontologically inferior to the living cow. The moment it dies, its sacredness evaporates, leaving the Dalit to remove the carcass. When a society evolves, its most painful element – the slave's humiliation, the modern worker's labour – is transformed into existential value, a creative becoming, not veiled by religious salvation promises. Ambedkar wrote: "The caste system is not merely a division of labourers – which is quite different from division of labour – it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other".⁷² Not the dogma of the Vanguard, but objective knowledge shared equally among the masses could overturn a system that stole the potential and possibilities of millions.

Ambedkar thus affirmed evolution, not Creation, as Koyré's limitless epistemic frontiers ruptured centuries of established natural law. Political, social, and ontological stakes marked absolute time's demise: "expressions of a deeper and more fundamental process", resulting in human loss of "place in the world". The Scientific Revolution would "replace not only [man's] fundamental concepts", but "even the very framework of his thought."⁷³ Koyré pioneeringly mapped epistemic frameworks: "We are no longer living in the world of Newtonian ideas ... we are both inside and outside of it, upon its threshold, beginning to analyse its structures, its underlying causes and failings". In 1957, Koyré wrote that the turn-of-the-century epistemic upheavals, beyond physics and astronomy, were really of a broader social nature. The social was labour, and not

71 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 268.

72 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 268.

73 Koyré, *Universe*, 2.

metaphysics: “the real conditions in which science is born, lives, and develops”.⁷⁴ Dewey had defined the “sociology of knowledge” in “action, risk, and labour”.⁷⁵ Ambedkar considered *inevitability* “completely disproved”: “The dictatorship of the Proletariat was first established in 1917 in one country ... it did not come as something inevitable without any kind of human effort”.⁷⁶ Responsibility for truth and ethics had fallen to Husserl’s fragmented ephemerality in the “lifeworld”. Restoration of an *ontological* substratum drove Hindutva populariser Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s (1883-1966) “theory of Time”. Attenuating the traditionally prior claims of Hinduism – puranas, Bhakti movements, popular Hinduism, folk and tribal accretions – Savarkar bolstered the seamless unity of politically constructed Hindutva “revivalism”.⁷⁷ An opinion poll could demonstrate the error of an ethical judgement. Against this, Ambedkar contended that secular ethical reasoning is possible, the kernel of the “scientific temper” in the communicative principle.

Maharashtra Dalits lived a prison sentence, in a cosmic scheme of pre-natal sins, justifying segregation, forced labour, and ritualized humiliation. Living forcibly outside the village, upon entering, Dalits crawled, worked, and begged for food as payment. Their shadows could contaminate. Avenging mobs beat some for eating ghee (butter). “Scavengers” cleaned human faeces over a lifetime in a divinely commanded labour hierarchy. Ambedkar imperilled his life, charging the Purusa Sukta – the eternal sacrifice sustaining the world, mandating a four-caste division – with being a “social imaginary”, not “ontological” inevitability. Rules of labour should not, he held, be fixed by antecedent “cosmic” tradition. If labour is a religious problem, human will does not change it, only divine grace.

74 Koyré, *Etudes*, 15, 393.

75 Dewey, *Philosophy*, 359.

76 Ambedkar, *SW*, 579.

77 Sharma, *Hindutva*, 135.

CHAPTER 6

Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Ahmed Ali: Two World War I Islamic modernisms

Afghani's Spectre, Imperial Divide and Rule, and the "Lifeworlds"

The 1930s Pakistan movement was barely a murmur in 1921. Indian Muslims, diverse in language, caste, and ethnicity, lacked common political organization, or territory.¹ Theosophist Annie Besant (1847-1933) fears over the Khalifate Movement, tens of thousands collectively embarking for Afghanistan, betrayed prejudices associated with a metaphysical image. In 1940-2, greater Muslim support existed for an undivided India, than for the Pakistan project.² Empire propped up Muslim communalists to counter multi-cultural Congress nationalism. "Divide and rule" strategies, entrenching Empire, manipulated imagined possibilities (nostalgias, regrets, desires and hopes), regardless of actuality. Vast and once prosperous Dhakka, Viceroy of India George Curzon (1889-1905) promised, would become the capital of a new Muslim majority province, with eighteen million Muslims and twelve million Hindus. Cynically appealing to pre-1857 nostalgia,

1 Stanley Wolpert. *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New Delhi: Oxford, 2005), 75.

2 Shamsul-Islam. *Muslims Against Partition of India. Revisiting the legacy of patriotic Muslims* (Delhi: Pharos Media, 2017), chapters 5 to 7.

he promised East Bengal Muslims a “unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussulman Viceroy and Kings”.³ Besant spoke of “Islam” with misplaced concreteness, as intrinsically destined to obliterate independent India:

“If India were independent, the Muslim part of the population ... would become an immediate peril to India’s freedom. Allying themselves with Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Persia, Iraq, Arabia, Turkey and Egypt, ... they would rise to place India under the Rule of Islam”.⁴

The 1930s Pakistan movement had scarcely emerged in 1921.⁵ Even in 1940-2, greater Muslim support existed for an undivided India, than for the Pakistan project.⁶ Like Besant, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) invoked a completed ontological whole, not multiple components, in his abstracted reflections on Indian politics. Both Besant and Iqbal suffered from the ontological illusion. The Pakistan dream materialized, inspired by Iqbal’s pioneering vision, as a loose North-West Indian configuration.⁷ A poetic statement of existential identity crisis, belonging, and homeland, it re-invoked Afghani’s “East-West” dualism in a transformed conceptuality. “Social imaginaries” produce accumulated “categories”, comparable to tools, which are widely shared. “Social imaginaries” require differentiation from “ontology”, the claim that these artefacts are natural or “inevitable”.

Iqbal, the Transnational Circulation of Ideas, and Middle Eastern Modernizers

German romanticism migrated into Iqbal’s experimental reconstruction of a usable political past, from out of the 1857 debris. Orientalist Friedrich Hommel (1854-1936), at Ludwig

3 Chandra, et.al. 125.

4 Ambedkar. *CW* 1882-3.

5 Wolpert, 75.

6 Shamsul-Islam, chapters 5 to 7.

7 Wolpert, 75.

Maximilian University in Munich, was Iqbal's teacher. Iqbal's historical diagnosis of India's Muslim "lifeworld" crisis was a mystical drama, an aesthetic triumph capturing the imagination of subsequent generations. Evoking out-of-body experience, occlusion from space-time, a landlocked ideal past screened from world history, Iqbal confronted Middle Eastern modernizers:

"The morning breeze is still in search of a Garden
Ill lodged in Ataturk or Reza Shah,
The soul of the East is still in search of a body."⁸

Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930) meditated on World War I's "lifeworld" significance. Its aftermath must "open our eyes to the inner meaning and destiny of Islam". The new adversary was rational Enlightenment. Urging "a spiritual interpretation of the universe", it debunked "truth revealed through pure reason". A Left current flowed through. Europe was "mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich".⁹ A Heideggerian critique of technology condemned "unprecedented control over nature", with "modern man robbed of faith in his own future", as his "secret despair hides behind the screen of scientific terminology". The *Reconstruction* was a pioneering reduction of science, capitalism, and secular democracy to "modernity". Modern man, "absorbed in fact", is "cut off from the unplumbed depths of his own being". "Modern materialism" had evacuated "meaning" from death, leaving "despair and anxiety". The Muslim, possessed of "ultimate ideas of the basis of a revelation", can build a "spiritual democracy", the "ultimate aim of Islam". This 1930s romantic discourse echoed *Being and Time*. Iqbal's call for "ontology" against "epistemology" to remedy the "crisis" invoked an "authentic" Islam, while chastising *existing*

8 Allama Muhammad Iqbal. *Poems from Iqbal. Rendering in English Verse with Comparative Urdu Text* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 208.

9 Allama Muhammad Iqbal. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace, 2015), 73-74.

Islamic social, intellectual, and cultural “lifeworlds” as having strayed from “true roots”. The “modern ‘Ulema do not see”, and “conservative criticism” must “serve as a check on the rapid movement of liberalism in the world of Islam”.¹⁰ Iqbal invented the *contamination* metaphor in anti-colonial discourse.

Iqbal: The Bergsonian “Lifeworld” and Organicism

An “enervating [modern] philosophy of life obscures man’s vision of himself, his God, and his world”. Only “prayer”, the “ultimate source of life and freedom”, offers “escape from mechanism to freedom”.¹¹ Freedom is “concrete experience” recovered from the modern scientific worldview: “The one is theory; the other is living experience, association intimacy”. Iqbal’s spiritual politics borrowed from Bergson’s *non-linear and immeasurable* “intensity”, rather than *objective* “extensity”. This “lived time” is a lifeworld *incommensurable* with scientific understanding, preserving “pure” mystical experience from reasonable scrutiny.¹² Iqbal writes: “True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity”.¹³ Iqbal writes:

“Science must necessarily select for study certain specific aspects of Reality only and exclude others. It is pure dogmatism on the part of science to claim that the aspects of Reality selected by it are the only aspects to be studied ... the pursuit of truth which science must necessarily exclude ... requires categories other than those employed by science”.¹⁴

Here is “the proper way to meet materialism”. Anti-science arguments were alien to al-Afghani. Iqbal shares Afghani’s Darwinian

10 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 77, 50, 74, 63.

11 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 45.

12 Henri Bergson. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Lisieux: PUF, 2008), 71-72, 144.

13 Iqbal, *Reconstruction* 49.

14 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 47.

anxieties: “It is highly improbable that a being whose evolution has taken millions of years should be thrown away as a thing of no use”. Evolution has “brought despair and anxiety to the modern world”. Afghani confronted fear of extinction with traditional metaphysics, while Iqbal employed the proto-postmodernism of Bergson and Heidegger, linking qualitative experience to communion with God (“the incommunicability of religious experience”).¹⁵ The main thing shared by these two gentlemen was the deep, arbitrary and unjustified *speciesism* common to human cultures everywhere.

Anti-modernism replaces practical questions of institution-building. Iqbal writes that “the present moment is one of the great crises in the history of modern culture”, “nationalism and atheistic socialism” drawing upon “forces of hate, suspicion, and resentment”, with the “modern world [standing] in need of biological renewal”. It is because “the modern man has ceased to live soulfully”, is “living in open conflict with himself”. In “the domain of economic and political life he is living in open conflict with others”, “unable to control his ruthless egoism and his infinite gold hunger”. Against this, “religion alone can ethically prepare the modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves”. Hence, modern science requires subordination to “the ruling concepts of the culture of Islam”, i.e., the “cultural paradigm”.¹⁶

In the totalitarian age, Iqbal appealed to “modern theocracy”. The “state” is “only an effort to realize the spiritual in human organization”. A “constitution” is of value only “provided man takes for his ideal the propagation of the Unity of God in the thoughts and actions of mankind”.¹⁷ At the Presidential Address to the 25th Session of the All-India Muslim League Allahabad in 1930, Iqbal opposed secular “democracy”, as the “chaos” of “ill adjusted nations”,

15 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 49, 50, 76.

16 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 77-78, 52.

17 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 64, 122.

resulting from the “dualist” error of “secularism”.¹⁸ Europe, lost with the Reformation, required Islamic guidance to face the Scientific Revolution. Counter-Enlightenment is not intrinsic to Islam. Iqbal pioneeringly anticipated the modernist irrationalism of the Taliban, who graffitied the wall of the Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue in Kabul: “Throw reason to the dogs. It stinks of corruption”.¹⁹ Islam has been intellectually reconstructed from European anti-modernist components, then politicized as organicism against “liberalism” as a “force of disintegration”.²⁰

In his 1930 Presidential Address to the Muslim League, invoking the “spirit of the East”, Iqbal explained *Reconstruction* in European organicist terms. Iqbal exaggerated the “remarkable homogeneity” of the “culture of Islam”, invoking a transnational political unity: “Sind has her back towards India and face towards Central Asia”. Invoking “purity” and “incommensurability”, each human group has “the right to free development according to its own cultural traditions”. Destiny eclipses causality: “Islam is itself a destiny and will not suffer a destiny”, as a “system of life and conduct”. Because “Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter”, mosque and state are “organic to each other”. Europe, as “her best thinkers are realizing”, is lost, having forsaken *being* in an “initial mistake”. In Islam, by contrast, “a universal polity” exists, although the “great difficulty is how to save the foundations of religion” in the “modern world”.²¹ The text ideologically crystallizes the modern Islamist revolt against the modern world, both equally fictitious constructions.

Iqbal: The State, Organicism and Magical Thinking

18 Muhammad Iqbal. *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977), 3-26.

19 Jason Burke. *Al-Qaeda. The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin, 2004), 122.

20 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 67.

21 Iqbal, *Speeches*, 3-26.

Iqbal's Address charges that the "national idea is racializing the outlook of Muslims". He attacks the nationalist-racialist fusion. He condemns neo-colonial Middle Eastern states for originating in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement. It is "fallacious" that "Turkey and Persia and other Muslim countries are progressing on national, i.e., territorial lines". Iqbal then rejects secularism, or "the proposition that religion is a private individual experience". He rejects parliamentary democracy, saying the "model of British democracy cannot be of any use in a land of many nations", a colonial argument. Iqbal then introduces ontological difference.

Islam is "wholly different" and, being "creative of a social order", entails the "fundamentals of a polity with implicit legal concepts" which is "organically related to the social order".²² Islam's inherent goodness – following revivalism - will automatically engender a perfect social order, "recreating the whole past as a living operative factor in the present consciousness". By implication, secularism, democracy and ethnic nationalism all belong to one Western "ontological" impulse that is incommensurable.

These ontological arguments provide the substratum for a world state. Iqbal writes: "I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state". The state must be purged of *inauthenticity* in a revivalist politics. The "Muslim state" must "rid itself of the stamp that Arab Imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit". Iqbal explains organicist prescriptions: "the present crisis in the history of India demands complete organization and unity of will and purpose in the Muslim community". Citing a "disorganized condition" which "has already confused political issues vital to the life of the community", Iqbal urges "the organic wholeness of a unified will". It is necessary to "rise above sectional interests", to "pass from matter to spirit", for "matter is diversity"

22 Iqbal, *Speeches*, 3-26.

while “spirit is light, life and unity”. The individual is nullified: “At critical moments in their history it is Islam that has saved Muslims and not vice versa”, invoking abstract concreteness. Only by “regaining lost integrity” can Muslims “save themselves from total destruction”. All Muslims, “as a people”, can “claim to be the first practical exponents” of a “superb conception of humanity”. Iqbal concludes that “things in India are not what they appear to be”, implying knowledge of a hidden plot.²³ Destiny is linked to entitlement, in the obscurity of conspiracy. Among the more potent 20th century “social imaginaries”, it is one of the more harmful in its consequences.

Ahmed Ali: A Second Islamic Modernism in the “Lifeworld” as Networks

Islamic modernism had contrasting interwar voices in India, in sociological “lifeworlds”. Ahmed Ali’s (1910-94) *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) documents the eclipse of Delhi’s old Mughal “lifeworld” through a South Asian Gothic landscape. Coherent identity fragments into multiple selves amidst anxieties about dissolution and transgression. *Twilight* traces the surviving vestiges of a Delhi Muslim feudal elite, from the 1911 Coronation to the outbreak of World War I, which the novel accurately depicts as a radical historical rupture in terms of all forms of social power. The cultural existence of the Delhi Muslim feudal elite fades in the bloody aftermath of the 1857 Uprising and the destruction of the Mughal Empire. The Mughal dynasty have become beggars:

“A beggar emerged from a by-lane, lifting himself up on his hands and dragging his legs along the floor ... There was a look of nobility on his bearded face, and his features unmistakably proclaimed that he was a descendent of Changez. ... Time has upturned the glass.”²⁴

23 Iqbal, *Speeches*, 3-26.

24 Ahmed Ali. *Twilight in Delhi* (Delhi: Rupa and Co., 2010), 149-150.

Every ruling elite in world history, seeking its own image in an imaginary eternal mirror, eventually encounter only a mirror of nothingness. The “eventful year” of the 1911 Coronation marked “the height of British splendour in India”, but from then “its downfall began”.²⁵ This extends to all organised power. *Twilight* recounts: “night came striding fast, bringing silence in its train, and covered up the empires of the world in its blanket of darkness and gloom”.²⁶ This echoes Karl Marx: “entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence”.²⁷ “Night” implies natural forces beyond the structural transformations marking regimes of capitalism. This banned English-language novel was deemed subversive by Empire. Ali recalls:

“I received a letter from the Publishers one morning ... regretting that the printers found some portions of the book ‘subversive’ ... [These included] historical portions dealing with the War of Independence of 1857 ... [The] prospects of publication became as bleak as the wartime blackout ... most of its stock was destroyed in the Blitz...”²⁸

This literary bombshell was among the first English language novels by an Indian Muslim. The patriarch Mir Nihal, while mourning the death of his secret concubine Babban Jaan from typhoid, provides the rule of interpretation:

“This world is a house of many mirrors. Wherever you turn, you see your own images in the glass. They multiply and become innumerable until you begin to feel frightened of your own self.”²⁹

The Mirror Principle is an identity that cannot be contained by borders, much as we saw with the swadeshi. The “world-house”

25 Ali, *Twilight*, 44.

26 Ali, *Twilight*, 275.

27 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Selected Writings* (London: Collector’s Library, 2009), 33.

28 Ali, *Twilight*, xvii-xviii.

29 Ali, *Twilight*, 118.

suggests universal identity in existential dislocation. ‘Emptiness’ and ‘non-self’ characterize *Twilight*. The Mirror Principle undoes selfhood boundaries. Mir Nihal would protect family “purity”. Losing control over family affairs with age, and facing imminent death, he becomes indifferent:

“It mattered little whether Asghar married a low-born or a girl with blue blood in her veins. He would not be in [the world] anyway. He had lived his life, good or bad, done all he could for the children and the purity of his stock. Now it was their lookout whether they flourished or decayed.”³⁰

Twilight expresses the specific Indian modernism to emerge as part of a transnational wave around the swadeshi period. Breaking caste laws, modernism is change and transgression. Aligarh Muslim University (founded 1920) wants to “make atheists of us all”, Mir Nihal tells his sons.³¹ The Mirror Principle deconstructs “purity” in a Buddhist view of non-identity: “There is no term in Buddhist terminology wider than *dhamma* ... ‘All *dhammas* are without Self”.³² It is equally a Marxist view, where, upon removing all social relations, nothing remains: “All that is solid melts into air”.³³ The French Resistance meets post-1920 Indian nationalism in dialectical thought. Ali struggled with the 20th century Left. Ali’s 1932 *Angaaray* Collective included Communist Party activists. Yet Ali left the Left-oriented All-India Progressive Writers’ Association (founded 1935) because of “differences over the meaning of ‘progressive’”³⁴:

“[...] a rift started [over] a disagreement on the function of art and the artist in society. [Ali], unwilling to define the word progressive as

30 Ali, *Twilight*, 119.

31 Ali, *Twilight*, 50.

32 Rahula, 58.

33 Marx/Engels, *SW*, 25.

34 Ahmed Ali, Mahmud-Uz-Zafar, Rashid Jahan & Sajjad Zaheer. *Angaaray* (London: Penguin, 2018), xxxiii.

‘communist,’ ‘proletarian,’ or ‘socialist realist,’ went his own way. But he viewed the term as a mean trying for the betterment of our social life”.³⁵

Ali was a democratic socialist, but refused to bow to party dogma. Like Tagore, his concept of a Mirror Principle had its central meaning in empathy. To Mir Nihal, “it seemed that it was not the child but he himself who was crying”.³⁶ Asghar and Hameed love lower caste girls, pursuing self-destruction of caste identity against family and community wishes. Memory triggers Asghar’s association of an attractive “Chamar” girl (i.e., “Untouchable”) with his childhood house in a cemetery, where his mother went insane, suggesting eroticism conditioned by forgotten trauma.³⁷ Ali’s publications sought “reform”:

“[...] it made us famous overnight, the government banned the book as subversive and our names were listed in the Intelligence Bureau as communists ... The mirror had warped our own image in reverse. The social order we had set out to reform, pronounced us West-Stricken devils!”³⁸

Ali’s term “West-stricken” reveals disdain for allegations of cultural inauthenticity. He upheld Indian “composite culture”. Dilchain is a Hindu convert to Islam.³⁹ *Twilight* recurrently invokes “composite culture”: “Though Islam permitted [Begam Waheed] to marry again, the social code, derived mostly from prevailing Hindu practice, did not favour a second marriage”.⁴⁰

Ali embraced equality, revealing convictions about “linear” (i.e., “dialectical”) historical change. His 1932 publication of *Angaaray* (‘burning coals’ in Urdu), with a collective, was called “piety

35 T. Jeevan Kumar. “Ahmed Ali: A Progressive Writer”. *The English Literature Journal*, 1(2), 56-61, 2014.

36 Ali, *Twilight*, 118.

37 Ali, *Twilight*, 52-53.

38 Ali, *Twilight*, 14.

39 Ali, *Twilight*, 266.

40 Ali, *Twilight*, 36.

destroying” by orthodox north Indian Muslims.⁴¹ Fatwas incited execution, while gynaecologist Rashid Jahan (the only woman) was threatened with an acid attack. *Angaaray* was banned in 1933, citing protection of the “religious feeling of any class of His Majesty’s subjects”.⁴² Ali’s “The Clouds Aren’t Coming” critiqued gender oppression:

“Don’t tell me that God is a collection of merciful actions ... what kind of wretched existence is life as a woman: worse than being a tick. She works, she labours, sewing clothes, cooking meals, from morning till night ... she has the privilege of producing children. Whether she wants to or not, when her husband wants to, he just grabs her by the hand and drags her ... May he die an early death ... Why are we powerless? If we had our own money, we wouldn’t have to endure this humiliation. We could do whatever we wanted whenever we wanted.”⁴³

This passage “dialectically” identifies structures of gender oppression, then projects their negation through power redistribution. Ali recalls: “A few of us, filled with dreams of freedom and independence, made bold to publish in 1932 a collection of our short stories ... to show a mirror to society”.⁴⁴ The Mirror Principle was, then, also a device for social reconstruction. Teleology is epistemological: we have to move forward to learn cause-consequence lessons. Legally instituted gender equality overcomes the “repetition” of tradition, rooted in a wider social struggle for change. The *Angaaray* manifesto described the:

“... duty of Indian writers [as assisting] the spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature ... [It must deal with] ... problems of poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines

41 Ali, et.al. *Angaaray*, vii.

42 Ali, et.al. *Angaaray*, ix.

43 Ali, et.al. *Angaaray*, 81-83.

44 Ali, *Twilight*, xiv.

customs and institutions in the light of reason, which helps us to act, to organize ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive.”⁴⁵

We see the importance of Ali’s activities in articulating the Indian concept of the “scientific temper”. Progressive temporality is not “repetition”. Ali questions the very concept (rather than the existence) of God: “What bad fortune to have been born into a Muslim family. Let this religion burn! ... Comfort for the soul? It’s only a comfort for men. What good is it to a woman?” However shocking, Ali was no atheist. In 1988, his esteemed if controversial *Al-Qur’an. A Contemporary Translation* was a landmark.⁴⁶ Ali saw God mediated through power relations. *Angaaray* progressively broached marital rape, birth control, education, and women’s right to work, following the radical Enlightenment tradition of building new egalitarian social orders. In *Twilight*, women’s bodies perpetuate property and the male line – much as in bourgeois 1930s France so it was under the Raj.

In Delhi, “ruin has descended upon its monuments and its buildings”, the “city looks deathly and dark”, with refuse “licked by cats who steal out of dark corners”. Stark images recur hypnotically, the psychological textures of colonial occupation. Delhi is a metaphorical maze: new walls replace old walls, nobles become businessmen to survive, while time’s passage flows disjointedly like a sleeper struggling to awaken from a nightmare:

“The city lies indifferent or asleep ... The lovers have departed ... Only the narrow bylanes and alleys, insidious as a game of chess, intersect the city and the streets ... Grow narrower as you plunge into them, giving a feeling of suffocation and death, until they terminate at some house front or meet another set of by-lanes as insidious as before ... Such a net of alleys goes deep into the bowels of the city ... Growing narrower like the road of life, and terminates at the house of Mir Nirhal”.⁴⁷

45 Ali, et.al. *Angaaray*, 84.

46 Neal Robinson. *Islam: A Concise Introduction* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 73.

47 Ali, *Twilight*, 30-31.

The characters populate Delhi's field of ruins, a post-war trauma, enduring remote but ubiquitous military occupation where bitter hope is the currency of the vanquished:

“The sun was setting and the western horizon was dyed a dirty red for the atmosphere was not clear and the dust and the smoke of engines far away had made the air dirty and black. Flocks of pigeons rose from the house tops and were lost in the toneless colours of the darkening sky. Far and wide, wherever the eye could see, houses stretched for miles. ... Suddenly in the midst of this dreary scene was flung a stone. A moazzin from a nearby mosque raised his voice, calling the faithful to evening prayer. ... His resonant voice bringing peace and rest, and a sense of the transience of life, that all that we do is meaningless and vain. ... it died away, leaving a sense of silence and a buzzing sound in the ears.”⁴⁸

The transgression of caste hierarchy has torn apart Mir Nirhal's family. His sons refuse arranged marriages, showing indifference to family prestige. Value and meaning are in violent flux. Mir Nirhal sees the value-investing cultural cosmos irreversibly undone. The Mughal composite culture – Islam and Hinduism fused at innumerable points – dies a long and slow death upon the angst-ridden cultural vista of Imperial divide and rule. In Ahmed's materialism of decay, nothing is pure. Identities dissolve inexorably in time, even as nostalgia for Mughal greatness grips the dying generation. The family patriarch obsessively remembers the 1857 butchery:

“a silence and apathy of death descended upon the city, and dust began to blow in its streets, and ruin came upon its culture and purity ... the poet [Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal] sang its last dirges while travelling in a bullock cart to Lucknow”.⁴⁹

Zafar, unrecognized, announces himself a “resident of that storm-tossed place” where “dwelt only the loved ones of fate”, but

48 Ali, *Twilight*, 30-31.

49 Ali, *Twilight*, 4-5.

which has “now been ruined by the hand of Time”.⁵⁰ Ontology fades against ordinary time’s random turnings. Mir Nirhal’s sons don Western clothes, to his disgust, swept into a nationalist and terrorist insurgency that the old man cannot relate to. Blind and paralyzed, he recalls the intimate smells, the ruins, anguish, and physical pains, never transcending fugacity to recover the whole. No ideological ray of the ontologically reunified global *ummah*, panacea for the Materialist sickness, shines down as in Iqbal’s *Reconstruction*. This absence highlights the ideological aberration of Iqbal’s vision of Islam, even as he presented it as uniquely authentic.

Iqbal and Ahmed Ali: Islamic Modernisms on Indian Independence Eve

These two Islamic modernisms diverge as temporal horizons. Iqbal’s utopianism, a Bergson-Sufi epiphany, is absent in the ordinary flux of Ali’s Delhi. For Iqbal, certain Sufi visions contained the Prophet’s *authentic* message. Islam’s clerical and intellectual mainstream had strayed into an “enervating philosophy of life which obscures man’s vision of himself, his God, and his world”.⁵¹ Iqbal’s “epistemic rupture” relativizes scientific truth, echoing *Being and Time*’s early pages: “Classical Physics has learned to criticize its own foundations”.⁵² Therefore, the “kind of materialism, which it originally necessitated, is rapidly disappearing”. Modern science is merely one unstable perspective. The relativity revolution makes God possible again: “the teachings of modern physics” affirm the “metaphor of light as applied to God” (i.e., the Light Surah). Relativity was intuitively anticipated in Sufi visions. Bergson’s revolution is also an old Sufi achievement. Modern achievements arise from the “anti-classical spirit of European culture”, i.e., concreteness. Iqbal reinterprets Islam as the secret trigger modern

50 Ali, *Twilight*, 4-5.

51 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 3.

52 Heidegger, *BT*, 8-9.

Western “development” achievements: “the anti-classical spirit of the modern world has really arisen out of the revolt of Islam against Greek thought”.⁵³

In Ali’s Delhi, the enemy is at home. Generational, family, gender, class and ideological conflicts sunder community. Iqbal’s is Heideggerian “concreteness”. His “perfect” politics cannot “harbour its own enemy at home”.⁵⁴ Europe, according to Iqbal, was the creation of early Islam – both of which *lost* “concreteness” (i.e., *being*) through declining into “metaphysics”. Nowhere does Ali hint at Iqbal’s historically accrued “magian crust”. Invasive Greek rationalist amnesia has occluded understanding of the Qur’an as “anti-classical”, i.e., concrete. Iqbal reduces Islamic historical civilization to error. Islamic authenticity requires removal of the “magian crust”, an act of divine appeasement:

“a Magian crust has grown over Islam ... Indeed, my main purpose in these lectures has been to secure a vision of the spirit of Islam as emancipated from its Magian overlappings.”⁵⁵

Primordial inspiration drove early Islam. The ontological “lifeworld” is defined by its purity: the “world-life intuitively seeing its own needs”, having “flashed across the consciousness of a simple people untouched by any ancient cultures”, as the “foundation of world-unity in the principle of Tauhid”. This “rejecting the old static view of the universe” has been forgotten with the “political expansion of Islam”. The Muslim state has been “left generally in the hands of intellectual mediocrities and the unthinking masses”. Political elitism is linked to the need for overcoming Western metaphysics. Abbasid embrace of static Greek metaphysics has inflicted the “immobility of Islam during the last five hundred years”. The “first throb of life in modern Islam” emerged with Ibn Taimiyyah’s (1263-1328) “return to first principles to make

53 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 1, 27, 40-49, 59.

54 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 27.

55 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 60-63.

a fresh start”, celebrating intolerant revivalist currents. From the “cleanest spot in the decadent world of Islam”, was the “great puritan reformer, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab”, “spreading the fire of his restless soul throughout the whole world of Islam”.⁵⁶

Iqbal thereby rejects Islamic history, since the days of the Prophet, as inauthentic cultural heterogeneity lacking modern dynamism:

“The pure brow of Tauhid has received an impress of heathenism, and the universal and impersonal character of the ethical ideals of Islam has been lost through a process of localization. The only alternative open to us, then, is to tear off from Islam the hard crust which has immobilized an essentially dynamic outlook on life.”⁵⁷

The “reconstruction” will “rediscover the original verities of freedom, equality, and solidarity with a view to rebuild our moral, social, and political ideals out of their original simplicity and universality”. The project will “rebuild the laws of Shari’ah in the light of modern thought and experience”, entailing that “the republican form of government” is “thoroughly consistent with the spirit of Islam”.⁵⁸ Iqbal manipulates from the shallows of nomenclature. Like *Being and Time*, a lost original experience is the key to recovering a prescientific meaning of truth. No concern exists for sociological institution-building, politics, or conflict resolution, dismissed as the “failure in Europe in political and social sciences”. A retrieval of the original source – “man’s loyalty to his own ideal nature” – will build a perfect society by divine appeasement.⁵⁹

In *Twilight in Delhi*, social change is devoid of Iqbal’s millennial magic. It is an everyday struggle over labour and power, amidst technological revolutions and colonial oppression. A superstitious world of hybrid cultures, metaphorical animal attacks, musical

56 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 60-63.

57 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 64-65.

58 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 64-65.

59 Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 61.

intoxication, lapse into mental illness and obsessive love, blackmail and dark family secrets, the everyday politics of caste and gender govern individual conduct in complex relation to colonial power. A new middle-class generation emerges through government service, emphasising institutional proliferation and class dynamics. Grave robbery is rife amongst the immiserated masses, emphasising grinding poverty. Deadly epidemics strike every social class. It is the time of occupation: "Time had reversed the order of things, and life had been replaced by a death in life".⁶⁰ The youth forget the memories of their parents, pursuing terrorist speed and violence to overthrow an Empire which, for their parents, meant the extinction of a world the youth have never seen. We do not forget what we do not see.

Mir Nirhal, for whom steadfast honour defines a sacred violence, must "lay on the bed, day in, day out, yearning, remembering, buried under the debris of dreams", "filled with a sense of the futility of his life". He reflects that "Delhi had fallen":

"India had been despoiled; all that he stood for had been destroyed. Only a year ago [1916] a new wave of freedom had surged across the breast of Hindustan. People had become conscious and wished to come back to their own. The Home Rule Movement was started, and there were prophetic rumblings of distant thunder as the Movement went sweeping over India. But, somehow, all this did not affect Mir Nihal ... His days had gone, and a new era of hopes and aspirations, which he neither understood nor sympathized with, was beginning to dawn. His world had fallen. Let others build their own."⁶¹

Painful intergenerational rupture defines revolutions in meaning and values. Indian nationalism leaves Mir Nirhal cold. Like Shakespeare's *King Lear*, he embodies decaying time. Transgression (of gender, caste, religion, etc.) and occlusion (of memory, tradition, physical space, etc.) refer to Empire's double power, in coercive and seductive power (shoes, language, hairstyle, conceptions of

60 Ali, *Twilight*, 241.

61 Ali, *Twilight*, 239-240.

love). All characters are one in death. The First World War begins suddenly and unstoppably, from across the globe, conducted by masters for whom they exist only as Empire's subject populations.

In *Twilight in Delhi*, the characters are sincere believers, but far from Iqbal's "perfect man". From a-historical timelessness in alternating "signs" of night and day, to imposed Western temporalities of colonial occupation and war, to forgetting, the novel depicts modern experiences without resolution. Sharing features with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1901), *Twilight in Delhi* partakes of the Indian Muslim literary tradition of Mirza Ghalib's (1797-1869) post-1857 despair. Ghalib's letters convey a black mood of decline: "Excess of grief can push a man to the verge of madness ... the weight of sorrow has unsettled my mind ... grief of death, grief of parting, grief of livelihood, grief of reputation".⁶²

Against this mood of decline, Iqbal invents a new and commanding voice. It renews communal confidence in magic, destiny and eternal truth. Encompassing modern science and technology, it promises guidance within Qur'anic revelation. *Reconstruction* voiced the 1930s Islamism that fuelled the Pakistan Movement, and Jinnah's mysterious "conversion". Iqbal "demonstrated" hermeneutically that Einstein or Bergson copied older, forgotten, Islamic traditions, buried under Hellenized corruption. In "true democracy", freedom has no link to plural autonomous institutions, but public conformity to a divine purpose. The Hindus had done it. Organicism was scarcely unique to Islam. In its multiple guises, this ideological falsehood is a political and ethical disaster, invariably making worse the problems it promises to overcome. In Ali's writings and activism, we see another conception of Indian Islam from the same period, one that is socially progressive in seeking to empower those who are the victims of historically entrenched power abuse. It is necessary to study Ali's work to fully appreciate the meaning of the "scientific temper" as it emerged out

⁶² Mirza Ghalib. *Selected Lyrics and Letters* (New York: Sterling Publishers, 2005), 403.

of the swadeshi and shaped the thought of the rising Indian mass movement for national independence under figures like Gandhi and Nehru.

PART III

Nehru's India and Nasser's Egypt:
Two Modernist Experiments in
the "Hegemonic" Politics of
Post-colonial Nation-making

CHAPTER 7

Nasser's 1960 Ramilla Square Rally, New Delhi: Modernism as Political Silence, and the Twilight of Civilian Power in Egypt

The Sources of Social Power

To return again to Michael Mann's sources of social power, the following passages capture the problematic of this section. Mann begins by replying to the following question, that he received from critics of his work: "Why do you separate political and military power? ... My answer is because they have been separated, autonomous, in our own era – with devastating consequences". He writes: "... the unusual period of geopolitical and social peace dominating the West since World War II has led sociology to neglect the importance of military organization for modern society". This is so because: "Contemporary sociologists have interpreted these developments under the influence of two dominant and relatively pacific theories of modern times, liberalism and Marxism". Their work focuses on "the 'pacification' of civil society itself through routinized policing and 'internalised discipline'". Mann sums up this thesis, that is exemplified in Foucault, in the following way: "Violence in modern society is hidden, institutionalized (though feminists insist that family violence remains). We no longer count

the bodies, we psychoanalyze the victims”. This has relevance also for Marxian theory, because “whereas historic modes of production extracted surplus labor with the help of violence, capitalism does it through the economic process itself”.¹

At this point, Mann goes into a rare discussion in which he compares Western social forms during this period to those in the “Third World”. There are two parts to Mann’s discussion of a sociological consensus that he traces: (1) we do not see the decline of war in Western societies, but rather a concentration of military power pointing outwards towards other states in the nation-state system; (2) yet no such transition has occurred in the 20th century Third World: “Its armed forces point enormous military firepower inward against their own subjects, with few of the inhibitions shown by historic Western regimes”. The Third World experience has therefore differed from the Western experience, in which we have “witnessed a major transformation of military power – from dual function (war/repression) to singular (war), detaching militaries from class struggle”.

Mann then addresses the veracity of this sociological consensus in his view. The following passage reveals, firstly, that Mann perceives the offset of World War I to be a revolutionary rupture or qualitative leap, much as Piketty as well as Polanyi argued elsewhere in the discussions we have reviewed so far. It shows, secondly, how the predominance of military power in a society is in inverse relation to the conciliation of labor relations through the institutionalised rule of law, or the citizenship achievement:

“Is this true – substantially, yes – but not during this period (1760-1914) or primarily for the reasons cited by Foucault, Giddens, Dandeker, and Elias. They are right that social order in contemporary Western society – apart from American inner cities – is buttressed by far less repression than in most historic societies and that this leaves the military largely pointing outward. But this has been achieved predominantly in the [second half of the] *twentieth* century, due mostly to two other power achievements:

1 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 403-405.

political and social citizenship and the institutional conciliation of labor relations. [...] Because political and social citizenship has not been achieved in most of the Third World, this explains why militaries still point inward there. The evidence will show that neither 'discipline' nor the removal of military from domestic repression had got far [in Western societies] by 1914."²

As we have seen, the transition from the predominance of military to civilian power (i.e., military to political) was a primary aim of the Urabi revolution, both at the level of leadership and popular aspirations. These collective efforts were thwarted through bloody British military intervention, followed by colonial occupation that froze relations of class domination to the benefit of British capital. The creation of a system of power based on citizenship from out of other statist (tributary, military, colonial, etc.) types of power might be called the "national transition", and this is the central thread of the following section. The 1953 Free Officer coup was an opportunity to renew the collective project of a "national transition", because it rid Egypt of British colonial occupation. However, as we have seen, there are integral elements to a successful "national transition", notably in the principle of the Autonomy of Science, which involves an open public space permitting the circulatory relation between institutional and individual capabilities. We thereby identify the kernel of the "scientific temper", the problematic that we have been tracing through diverse historical landscapes in this work.

The "Scientific Temper"

There is every reason to assess the Nasserite experience within the discursive frame of the "scientific temper" problematic. It had strong secular features and partook of the transnational movement affirming the new emancipatory promise of the modern scientific method. Across the early 20th century Arab world, secularization and nationalization flowed through anti-colonial struggles. Muslim-

2 Mann, *Vol. 2*, 405-406.

Christian societies mushroomed across World War I Palestine, alliances in a “double movement”. Throughout the Arab world, Jews joined anti-colonial alliances. Colonialism “implanted” neither secularism nor nationalism, but violently opposed them. The Zionist demand in Palestine for total loyalty from the veteran Jewish community thwarted the Middle East secularization process. It arrested the Palestinian modernization process underway since the 19th century.³

The Cairo Fire: Crisis of the Liberal Order as “Institutional-Capabilities” Failure

Secret networks negated communication during Egypt’s “national transition”, a moment within a system of silence. In January 1952, mass rioting incinerated Cairo. British army tanks and artillery in Ismailiyah had assaulted a police station, killing forty Egyptian policemen. The conflagration burned British-owned establishments, clubs and businesses, and other foreign-owned enterprises. As smoke engulfed Cairo, the majority witnessed the burning skyline hiding indoors.⁴ Violent insurgency excludes mass participation: “whether of a terrorist or a guerrilla nature, or in an army of liberation”, it “necessarily involves long absences from home, total disruption of normal life, complete abandonment of normal livelihood, and loss of life”.⁵ The absence of the ballot seeds the bullet. Mass mobilization, meanwhile, is effective when tactically pursuing specific and realizable goals, requiring a lengthy stage of preparatory communication.

It is in this way that the Indian experience under Gandhian leadership was exemplary of a specific type of national politics. A

3 Ilan Pappé. *Ten Myths About Israel* (London: Verso, 2017), 7-10.

4 Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot. *A History of Egypt from the Arab Conquest to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 78.

5 Bipan Chandra. *Indian National Movement: The Long Term Dynamics* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1989), 46-47.

multi-class movement involved diverse sections of the population directly in a common struggle in a way that exposed them to entirely new experiences of political action. India's non-violent freedom struggle saw "more women in positions of importance than in the Russian and Chinese revolutionary movements put together".⁶ Gandhi said: "We were able to enlist as soldiers, millions of men, women and children, because we were pledged to non-violence".⁷ This "lifeworld" rooting of organized public action contrasts with the military opportunity amidst disorder. The military re-imposed order amidst Cairo's gutted department stores, smouldering shells and broken glass.

The British infrastructure incinerated within hours – bars, cinemas, night clubs, everything suggesting foreign influence burned. The Cairo fire also extinguished Egypt's liberal order, a collaborationist order.⁸ Long gone was Zaghlul, dead in exile in 1927. The 1919 revolution forced a British-Egyptian nationalist *modus vivendi*. Egypt's 1922 independence disguised continued military and economic control, Egypt's first elected government being militarily overthrown in 1924.⁹ Twenty-eight years of factionalized, unstable, and inefficient parliamentary rule undermined intelligentsia faith in the system. By the mid-1930s street battles, "party politics" (*al-hizbiyyah*) meant personal corruption and patronage.¹⁰ British armoured cars encircled Abdin Palace in 1942, forcing an all-Wafd cabinet upon King Farouk. The Wafd Party thus became collaborators, not resisters, as viewed by Egypt's masses. "Institutional-capabilities" failure, and not cultural *authenticity*, marred Egypt's liberal order. It "hegemonically" failed to mobilize peasant and worker social politics, while losing the trust

6 Chandra, *Dynamics*, 6-47.

7 D. G. Tendulkar. *Mahatma*. (Delhi: Publications Division, 1992), 3, 78.

8 Gilles Tarabout / Ranabir Samaddar, eds. *Conflict, Power, and the Landscape of Constitutionalism* (London: Routledge, 2008), 45.

9 Gordon, *Blessed*, 14-15.

10 Gordon, *Blessed*, 14.

of young Egyptians. Paramilitary and Fascist-inspired Young Egypt formed in 1933.¹¹ A military vanguard party perhaps promised an exit from Empire.

Egypt's elite nationalism resembled pre-1920 Indian elite nationalism. The Indian Non-Cooperation (1920-22) and Civil Disobedience (1930-31) Movements, with everyday Constructive Work, transcended elitism only under Gandhian leadership. Leadership must reach the masses to secure post-revolutionary success. From the 1930s, the Wafd and the Egyptian masses split, straining the party rank and file, with whom "no intimate contact" remained.¹² Revolutionary politics narrowed to secret terrorist networks: the Muslim Brotherhood, the Communists from the 1940s, both secret organizations enlisting the youthful Free Officers. Gandhi's public organizational skills, grounded upon public view, witness, and remembrance, marginalized secret terrorist networks after 1920, while minimizing divisive religious organicism which served Empire's ends. Gandhi was an *organizer*, too often misconstrued as foremost an ideologue. He fostered "institutional capabilities", that is, the capacity of the Indian masses to force legalistic and institutional concessions from the colonial regime.

The random violence preceding the Cairo Fire forged an uncontrollable dynamic. It destroyed constructive communication, forcing political secrecy, riveting national politics upon a militarized track. The youthful Free Officers were schooled amidst violence and secretive rival networks. Young Egypt's Green Shirts fought Wafdist Blue Shirts. The Muslim Brotherhood counter-example - networks of schools, clinics, and welfare institutions - deeply rooted public trust.¹³ By the 1940s, however, Muslim Brotherhood currents embraced violence, bombing cinemas and assassinating politicians,

11 Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. *A Brief History of Egypt* (New York: Facts on File, 2008), 131, 134.

12 Quraishi, 121.

13 Goldschmidt, 138-9.

judges, and police officers.¹⁴ The Free Officers' organizational pyramid obeyed secretive top-down directives.¹⁵ Underground networks proliferated with the creation of the Israeli State in 1948, in a transnational spread of organized political violence. King Farouk sponsored Muslim Brotherhood cells in Palestine, to divert revolutionary energies abroad. The veterans returned, battle-hardened and displaced, targeting the colonial nexus sustaining Farouk's unpopular power.¹⁶ The Egyptian "national transition" was certainly handicapped by this deadly geopolitical matrix.

The Cairo fire was an opportunity, forcing King Farouk into Italian exile. Social chaos overthrew the Wafd, in the twilight of civilian power. The Free Officer conspiracy of July 23, 1952 thrived on public fear and disorder. Earlier institutional transformations quietly paved the way. The Egyptian Military Academy had excluded all but Pashas' sons. The 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty now included secondary school graduates through competitive examination, a revolutionary opening.¹⁷ Between 1936 and 1952, the military appendage of Empire and traditional military families became the site of proliferating non-civilian oppositional networks, further infusing Egypt's "national transition" with the military logic that had previously been rooted under Mohammad Ali.¹⁸ Spurning transition to a political party, Nasserism remained a secretive cabal. The 1952 spectacle dazzled Egyptians of all social classes, the fortuity exceeding Officer expectations. "Institutional-capabilities" failure, an absence of organized civilian power, produced the 1952 army conspiracy in a "terribly unhappy country" with a "police state atmosphere everywhere".¹⁹

14 Jeremy Bowen, *The Arab Uprisings* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 181.

15 Gordon, *Blessed*, 42-46.

16 Tarabout/Samaddar, 50.

17 Goldschmidt, 140-41.

18 Gordon, *Blessed*, 39-40.

19 P.J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and his Generation* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 121-3.

The Twilight of the Wafd: From Secret to Open Networks, an Experiment in Ideological Inclusiveness

An identifiable dynamic is not shattered by diversities across occasions: in 1950, the newly returned Wafd unsealed decades of repression, to placate the youthful electorate, economic hardship unleashing an uncontrollable critical torrent. From 1950-2, new newspaper debates deluged Egyptian public space, unexampled in openness. Young Egypt, socialists, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Marxists, urging economic improvement and political self-empowerment, mounted a scattered anti-regime revolt. Abrupt openness and weak public organization deteriorated into violence. The opposition, with their secret roots routinely erased, had organizational practices limited to sporadic terrorist strikes, culminating in the 1952 Cairo fire, a matrix of “institutional-capabilities” failures seeding dictatorship.

Egypt’s “national transition” was defined by the challenge of deeply inequalitarian structural conditions. We might first consider how economic power – in this case, the coercive meaning of property ownership – defined the entire nation-making horizon in all of its dangers and limits. Following the 1952 coup, sweeping agrarian reform decrees were passed, limiting large landholdings, abolishing family trust estates, and distributing surplus land to peasants. Although land reform essentially abolished the political influence of major land owners, it only resulted in the redistribution of about 15% of Egypt’s land under cultivation. By the early 1980s, the effects of Egyptian land reform dwindled as the population moved away from agriculture. The Egyptian land reform laws were greatly curtailed under Anwar Sadat and eventually abolished. Prior to the 1952 coup, nevertheless, fewer than 6 % of the Egyptian population owned more than 65% of the land, and less than 0.5% of the population owned more than one-third of all fertile land. Royal ownership of one-tenth of Egypt’s arable land, the major wealth-power nexus structuring agrarian society, clashed with multiplying doctors, lawyers, economists, and teachers of an

emergent middle class. Government, judiciary, and ulema posts remained overwhelmingly occupied by landowners, unwilling to reallocate land.²⁰ Land owners had an autocratic control over land, charging high rents which averaged 75% of the income generated by the rented land. Coupled with the high interest rates charged by banks, these conditions entrapped small farmers and peasants in crushing debt. The fast-accelerating rich-poor gap generated violent class conflict. Anouar Abdel Malek has described pre-reform Egyptian peasantry as “an exploited mass surrounded by hunger, disease and death”.²¹

The 1950-52 Egyptian uprising, as a result, had a socialist revolutionary character, fusing raw grievances, modern ideologies, and traditional peasant hostility to the infidel (i.e., material deprivation had been relatively tolerated under Muslim regimes).²² University campuses exploded, while workers' strikes multiplied, focused on the Suez Canal Zone, the final vestige of Empire. A loosely organized united front, comprising communists, feminists, Muslim Brothers, Socialist Party adherents, and the old Wafd Left, waged guerrilla war. Egyptian workers and office employees flooded from British affiliated factories and agencies, and railway workers, customs officials, airline employees, and longshoremen cut British supply lines by mass strike.²³ The multiplying occupational categories attest to a multi-class secularization process, a deeply rooted structural legacy of brutal capitalist extraction, and self-modernizing entrenchment of landed power. A “double movement” and “capabilities” pattern underpinned these experiences.

20 Goldschmidt, 136.

21 Anouar Abdel Malek. *Egypt: Military Society* (New York: Random House, 1968), 61.

22 Safran, 230.

23 Marsot, 75.

Quiet after the Fire: The Ascendancy of Military Power in the Democratic Transition

A double *system of silence* in post-independence materialized in an *organicist* “social imaginary”. Military power silenced Egypt’s polyvocal “national transition”. The military and police forces cleared the streets, reducing them to quiet. The illiteracy and disease of a widening rich and poor gap were silenced, with mortality rates among infants the highest worldwide.²⁴ The revolution lacked the organizing principle to navigate the intersecting state and democratic transitions. The *ex-nihilo* arrival of the Free Officers rendered the transition from a national movement to the inclusive and participatory politics of the nation-state a highly different undertaking. The 1952 coup echoed the Bukharin optic in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate.

To explain why this occurred, we require a conjunctural explanation. If we look a decade ahead, we see that, by the 1960s, Arab socialism had become the dominant ideology, transforming Egypt into a centrally planned economy. As we have just seen, a centrally planned economy corresponded to the structural challenges of the economic power configuration. No simple causal correlation exists between a planned economy and an autocratic state. The central economic planning strategy was perverted into a coercive state and paralysed society in part through geopolitical pressures. Official fear of a Western-sponsored counter-revolution, Saudi-sponsored religious extremism, Soviet-sponsored communist infiltration, and the existential military threat posed by the State of Israel were all cited as the basis for crushing political opposition and prohibiting a multi-party system. These restrictions on political activity endured throughout the presidency of Anwar Sadat from 1970 and beyond, even as the emancipatory policies of the Revolution were reversed.

This partly explains the predominance of military power

24 Goldschmidt, 123-25.

almost from the beginning of Egyptian independence. Proliferating newspapers on the eve of July 23, 1952 yielded to three dailies in 1953. University campuses succumbed to military force, with law, engineering, science, and medicine classes at Cairo University indefinitely suspended. The Free Officers silenced media and professional organizations, citing a Communist-Zionists conspiracy. A shrinking Egyptian opposition recognized the likeness of Soviet communism and Kemalist statism. A fascination with fascist Germany and Italy inspired CCR members. There were public calls for principle over personality.²⁵ The Free Officers, facing “hegemonic” emergency, responded by crushing networks in favour of purism. That is to say, we cannot explain the trajectory merely with reference to the structural conditions and the geopolitical conjuncture. We also require recourse to an explanation in terms of the ideological source of social power as having a relative autonomy in relation to conjunctural and structural pressures.

Ideological power was shaped by the “hegemonic” challenge. It was not as in India, where “hegemony” had been gained for the Congress party through decades of hard anti-colonial struggle. Nasser was a complete unknown in 1952. Later prestige was hard-won. The Free Officers lacked prior rootedness. The regime functioned in crisis-response mode, organicism providing an experimental enabling solution.²⁶ As we have seen, organicism as an ideological option is determined by the intrinsic correlation between the one-party state and the military source of power as mutually enforcing mechanisms within a circulatory dynamic. There may have been an open space in the early years through which the Egyptian regime could have escaped from this path dependent trap. Elements favoured Free Officer “hegemony”: Egypt had not been so free since the 1882 Urabi revolution, nor, since the Pharaohs, had Egyptians

25 Gordon, *Blessed*, 137-40, 147.

26 John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat. The Political Economy of Two Regimes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 278.

ruled their own country. Neither element guaranteed Free Officer prestige, but they provided the potential for it. The initial public reaction was anxiety over the ascendance of military power. Mass demand for restored parliamentary life sounded loudly in Egyptian streets.²⁷ Demonstrations and media publications throughout 1954 demanded the Free Officers “return to their barracks and leave politics to the politicians”. The RCC squashed these protests, adopting full powers and suppressing elections, purging labour unions, professional organizations, universities and the press. The military consolidated power in the “March Crisis”. Only now did Nasser publicly head the new regime.²⁸ Prestige came through ascending monumental acts.

Military elites embraced “charisma”. Persuading the masses that Free Officer rule was a kind of national inevitability, that they might forsake popular demands for civilian rule, was the Nasserite “hegemonic” challenge. The means were military spectacle, social gifts, divide and rule politics, and, ultimately, propaganda lies to mask “institutional-capabilities” failures. Nasser imparted gifts in social services, seeking to spare the Egyptian masses the worst suffering of industrial “development”. Egyptian progress collapsed suddenly in 1967.²⁹ Autocratic fragility resulted from, in Nasser’s last days, “a lack of a truly stable political order larger than his persona”.³⁰ The dead tree provides no shelter.

Regime Achievements: The Aswān High Dam

Let’s talk firstly, though, about the developmental achievements of the Nasserite regime. And these were considerable. Because of the absence of significant rainfall, Egyptian agriculture is entirely

27 Marsot, 128.

28 Gordon, *Blessed*, 32.

29 Joel Gordon. *Nasser Hero of the Arab Nation* (Oxford: One World, 2009), 122.

30 Gordon, *Blessed*, 125.

dependent upon irrigation. The story of the Aswān Dam therefore goes back to at least the 11th century, in the earliest recorded attempt at dam construction when the Arab polymath and engineer Ibn al-Haytham, under orders from Fatimid Caliph, Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, attempted – ultimately unsuccessfully - to regulate the flooding of the Nile. The annual late summer flooding of the Nile therefore continued unimpeded down the valley from its East African drainage basin, providing the nutrients and minerals that enriched the fertile soil of the Nile valley and made it ideal for farming. The natural flooding varied, however, with high-water years destroying entire crops and low-water years inflicting drought and famine. As the Egyptian population expanded and technology improved, the project of controlling the flooding to both protect and support the cotton crop grew as a political priority. The British subsequently constructed the first dam across the Nile from 1898 to 1902, the success of which inspired the key government objective following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952.

Therefore, the Aswān High Dam, the world's largest embankment dam, built across the Nile in Aswān, Egypt, between 1960 and 1970, represents a monumental taming of chance with great economic benefits in several simultaneous economic sectors. For the first time in history, the Aswān High Dam brought the annual Nile flood under human control, impounding and releasing floodwaters when needed to maximize their utility on irrigated land, while also improving the navigation systems circulating around Aswān, and generating enormous quantities of hydroelectric power, as well as supporting a fishing industry. However, this was a project that was embroiled in geopolitical intrigue and risk from its inception. The Aswān High Dam project began within two months of the Free Officer coup, with the bitter Cold War rivals the United States and the USSR both immediately volunteering to provide assistance for the dam development and seeking to outbid one another.

Growing intra-Arab tensions further added to the complication,

as, in 1955, Nasser proclaimed himself the leader of Arab nationalism, in a direct challenge the traditional monarchies, notably the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq. The 1955 Baghdad Pact had formed an alliance between Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and the United Kingdom, committing the nations to mutual cooperation, protection and mutual non-intervention, with the goal of containing the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, an Israeli assault on Egyptian forces in Gaza in 1955 provided Nasser with proof that his claim to be the leader of pan-Arab nationalism would require that he modernize his military, forcing him to seek aid now from the U.S. and now from the Soviet Union. Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey and Iraq were resentful that Egypt, a neutral country, was receiving so much aid. All of these factors forced Nasserite Egypt closer to the path of military power, and away from the transition to civilian power that had been the goal of collective struggle since the Urabi Revolution.

It was under these geopolitical circumstances that, in 1956, with wide Egyptian acclaim, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, with the revenues generated intended to help fund construction of the High Dam. Instead of the act of nationalisation producing the autonomous space for Egypt that it was intended to, it triggered an even deeper descent into the maelstrom of military power with its violent logic of ever-narrowing possibilities. In the ensuing Suez War, the United Kingdom, France, and Israel invaded Egypt and seized the canal and the Sinai. After the U.S. and the USSR forced a withdrawal through the UN, it was finally the USSR, in 1958, that provided the support for the High Dam project. The Soviets offered Nasser \$1.12 billion at 2% interest for the dam construction project, just as the U.S. State Department pronounced that American financial assistance was not feasible in present circumstances. The Aswān High Dam achievement was a landmark in Egyptian history, ensuring protection from floods and droughts, increasing agricultural production, employment as well as electricity production, and creating a navigation system

that has sustained the tourist industry. The dams protected Egypt from two cycles of drought, in 1972–73 and 1983–87, that both caused terrible suffering in East and West Africa.

Labour, Civic Religion, and Military Power in the Hegemonic Process

For all of the human achievement of the Aswān High Dam, the fundamental logic of the Nasserite regime remained military and could not penetrate the catalytic space of civilian activism rooted in the political source of social power. It is from this space that the “scientific temper” becomes meaningful as a force shaping national life. The Nasser regime’s major “institutional-capability” remained military, entailing civic institution-building neglect through the suppression of autonomous action within the space of Egyptian civil society, producing a catalytic loop in favour of dictatorial power. If we study the documents produced by the Nasserite regime, we understand the social ideals to which the Free Officers aspired in the early years.

There was a decidedly socialist orientation, a concern with uplifting the population following the extraction of decades under colonial rule. Nasser’s 1962 *Charter of National Action* emphasised labour: “Creative human labour is the only means for society to achieve its aims ... Human labour is the only key to progress.” This Marxist insight opposes coerced labour: “In centuries past some societies [provided] investments of national development through looting the wealth of colonies, exploiting the riches of peoples and forcing them to slave labour.” Colonialism and chattel slavery are primitive accumulation moments. The “nature of our times can no longer tolerate this”, as “the working class cannot be driven through forced labour to realize the objectives of production”.³¹

The symbolic expression of power, expressed in the Nasserite

31 Gamal Abdar Nasser. *The Charter of National Action*, in Rejwan, 249, 200.

limbo a between secular and religious representation of the regime, was shown in the *Charter* proclaiming its “unshakeable faith in God, His Prophets and His sacred messages”, yet with reference to no specific religion.³² In a 1962 speech, nevertheless, Nasser identified Islam as the Egyptian state religion.³³ A quasi-religious secularized concept of “eternal moral values” provided dull roots.³⁴ Devotion to the “Spiritual Leader”, Bergson urged in 1932, could lead modern societies from the soul-destroying existential impasse.³⁵ Nasser’s self-fulfilling power-retention cycle echoed the pre-coup “saviour myth” of a virtuous dictator, embraced by the Left as by others.³⁶ “Institutional-capabilities” failures generated the Islamist temptation. Nasser’s confrontation with his Salafist Saudi rival eclipsed it. He told a French journalist for *Paris-Presse*, in 1954:

“Honestly, after eighteen months in power, I still wonder how one might govern with the Qur’an ... It is susceptible to so many interpretations. Precisely because it is such an open book, it seems that it could never provide a political doctrine. It would always depend upon the mind of the leader who implemented it”.³⁷

It was the military, as the industrialization-reform instrument, that stabilized an authoritarian order.³⁸ Organicism (i.e., the inherently good leader, party or people) excluded the pluralist institutional rudiments underpinning human labour as a creatively world changing activity. The Nasserite regime dismantled

32 Nasser, *Charter*, 249, 200.

33 Nissim, Rejwan. *Nasserist Ideology. Its Exponents and Critics* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974), 35.

34 Nasser, *Charter*, 200.

35 Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron. *Bergson et le bergsonisme* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1999), 47.

36 Gordon, *Blessed*, 36-38.

37 Legrand, Jacques ed. *Chronique de Nasser* (Bassillac: Chronique, 1988), 38.

38 Steven A. Cook. *Ruling but not Governing. The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 2.

independent networks, while neglecting new ones. How, then, could it shift from extractive and exclusive power? The Nasserite regime remained locked within the logic of the second circle of violence and progress. One key to this closed horizon is the stifling of reliable circuits of information within the society.

Arab Nationalism

From 1956, an orbit of newly established Arab republics defined themselves using the discourse of revolutionary secular nationalism, and cited their inspiration in Nasser's Egypt. These secular nationalist political regimes entered into rivalry with conservative traditionalist Arab monarchies led by Saudi Arabia. Transnational networks caused Nasser's regime to gain greatly in domestic prestige. Following the 1955 Bandung conference, Nasser became "chief" (*ra'is*). This conjunctural political landscape endured until the 1979 Iranian Revolution, in which the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established a new type of regional power in theocratic Islamic government. The new era of Arab-Iranian tensions thereby eclipsed the intra-Arab strife that had been triggered by the transnational radiations of the Nasserite regime.

The Free Officers had contradictory political roots: Muslim Brotherhood, fascist Young Egypt, and communists. With the coup, Wafdists, Muslim Brothers, communists and rightists all claimed the "blessed revolution".³⁹ Once in power, political incongruities appeared. Foreign capitalists were invited back on good terms. In 1952, striking textile workers at Misr works near Alexandria were shot, arrested, and executed. However, we can understand the deeper ideology of the Nasserite regime within the tradition of Arab nationalism as a feature of *Nahda*, going back to the Mohammad Ali state capitalist transition and the cultural renaissance of the migrants of Mount Lebanon.

In a directly related way, colonial manipulation by the British

39 Goldschmidt, 144-146.

government of the Hashemites, the leading Arab family under the Ottoman Empire, explains the emergent dynamics of Arab nationalism. During World War I, in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, we find the British encouraging Sharif Hussein to rebel against the Ottoman overlords and promising to support Hashemite ambitions to be rulers of a new Pan-Arab kingdom. The British had simultaneously entered into the Sykes-Picot agreement, a plan to partition the Ottoman Empire with the other European colonial powers, a project entirely incompatible with promises to the Hashemites for a Pan-Arab state. Meanwhile, Britain also assured support in the 1917 Balfour declaration for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In the aftermath of the war, Hussein's son Feisal aspired to a leading governance role in Syria and Lebanon, only to be expelled from Damascus by French forces in 1920. By way of consolation and to secure a useful proxy for British Middle Eastern mandates, Winston Churchill subsequently made Feisal the King of Iraq and his brother Abdullah the Emir of Transjordan. Hashemite Pan-Arabism as a living political force survived and disseminated its ideology until the 1958 Iraqi July 14th Revolution overthrew the Hashemite monarchy in a coup d'état, inspired by the more radical anti-colonial variant of Pan-Arabism introduced by the Nasserite revolution of 1952.⁴⁰ The July 14th Revolution aspired to build a military regime of socialism and Arab unity, citing the UAR model.⁴¹ We see the game changing significance of the Nasserite entry into Middle Eastern geopolitics in the early 1950s both ideologically, as an uncompromising anti-colonial commitment, and strategically, as a method of obtaining power through a military coup d'état.

The origins of pan-Arabism are frequently attributed to Jurji Zaydan (1861–1914), a Lebanese Christian author of Syrian origin, whose historical novels and poems figured as an important part

40 Robert McNamara. *The Hashemites: The Dream of Arabia* (London: Haus, 2010), 20-30.

41 Goldschmidt, 165-166.

of the Nahda movement. The ideology Pan-Arabism reached the height of its popularity during the 1950s and 1960s, coterminous with the Nasserite experience. Espousing the unification of the countries in North Africa and Western Asia, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, it has an ideological proximity to Arab nationalism, the view that the Arabs of all religious backgrounds constitute one nation. The Arab nationalist ideology was the fruit of the anti-colonial conjuncture, being focused on opposing Western political involvement in the Arab countries (i.e., via the Hashemite monarchy), and espousing socialist principles to overcome the legacy of poverty from destruction of the Ottoman Empire and colonial occupation. This was not a Marxist socialism, however, grounded in a workerist cosmopolitanism. It was an ideologically distinct socialism embracing a romantic mythology of primordial community egalitarianism decimated by colonial scheming. Its central ideal was the nation united under a common purpose undivided by differences of class or wealth, the dream of a collectivist, cohesive society. The atheism and internationalism that we find in the communist movement of this time – the view of humankind as a single mass - is absent in Arab nationalism. This fact is exemplified in Michel Aflaq's *the Battle for One Destiny* (1958), a founding text of Baathism, the ideological source of the two Baathist states of the 1970s and 1980s, Iraq and Syria. Socialism is based on the principle of strength through unity, ethnic identity and a siege mentality.

It was not until Nasser came to power in Egypt in 1952 that Arab nationalism transferred from an ideological utopia to state policy, realising the dream of empowering Arab states against outside forces through alliance-building and economic co-operation. Within this geopolitical conjuncture, Nasser defined Egypt's position in the Middle East and the world as the adversary of Zionism in the neighbouring state of Israel. Following the popularity that Nasser gained among the Arab masses in diverse countries following the 1956 Suez crisis, the United Arab Republic

(UAR) in 1958 represented the pioneering first instance of an experimental merger between two previously-independent Arab countries. The now mostly forgotten U.A.R. frightened Western elites. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden (1955-1957) referred to Nasser as “a new Hitler”.⁴² The U.A.R. exists today among the extinct experimental transients of political modernism. It was a large country, from Qamishli in north eastern Syria to the extreme south in Aswan on the Nile River. The experiment failed to produce enduring institutions. By 1961, Egypt had become the only remaining member, while still calling itself “the UAR” to underline its openness to unification with other Arab countries, and finally renaming itself the “Arab Republic of Egypt” in 1973. We thus see the major significance of the Nasserite experience as a formative configuration for the tradition of Nahda, the roots of which can be traced diversely through the democratic commitments of Taha Hussein and his “scientific temper” writings, through the legalistic socialist ambitions of the Urabi Revolution to empower citizens (in tandem with the Young Ottomans), and, simultaneously but contradictorily, through the military authoritarianism of Mohammad Ali with its modernised dynastic ambitions. Nasser, as it happens, adopted the military authoritarian thread to the exclusion of the type of democratic socialist vision articulated by Taha Hussein, while nevertheless hoping to encompass the nation in terms of social rights and a populist politics of the charismatic strong man as anti-colonial protector of the people.

It follows that despite Nasser’s organicist usage of the “Arab nation”, the concept was not genetically thus. An initially secular-pluralist resonance emphasised the very rights of individual dissent that Nasser would deem superfluous to national regeneration. The first major Egyptian response to the “Arab nation” occurred with the 1925 Syrian revolt against France, prompting calls for Syrian self-rule in newspapers. “Rule of law” merged with unfamiliar

42 Yuen Foong Khong. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 28.

claims to common Egyptian identity with wider Arab interests. Post-1919 Wafd-era “Arab solidarity” generated from prior practical cooperation among the colonized and oppressed. Collective practices preceded “social imaginaries” – not simply “ideologies”, they emerge from shifting “lifeworld” arrangements. It is hence that we see the enduring importance of Afghani’s invention of “Easterners” as a new “social imaginary”. The fuller Egyptian embrace of “Arab nation” occurred in 1937. Mass anti-Palestinian Partition protests at the League of Nations demanded a guarantee of Palestinian independence, and that Jews residing in Palestine be treated in parity with Christians and Muslims. Variations on “Arab unity” further existed among Egyptian ruling elites, reflecting geopolitical revolutions, not persisting dynastic interests or abstract cultural identity.⁴³

Nevertheless, Nasser’s embrace of organicism is the central rupture separating his politics from the Nehruvian “scientific temper”, which, as we have seen, has its kernel in a principle affirming the autonomy of science. This is why Nehru describes the freedom struggle era Congress as networks: “national” because “multi-religious”, with “no reason why the richness and variety of India’s cultural life should be regimented under a single pattern”.⁴⁴ Nasser’s purist Arab Nation differs in its underlying “social imaginary”. It was as “one man”, “always victorious when united”, and so “closely knit” that it “cannot be left by any individual”.⁴⁵ “Arab unity”, he maintained, was the “basic weapon”, permitting “no party politics, no disunity”.⁴⁶ This vision of a unified will, identity and destiny contrasts with Nehru’s view of the nation as a molecular

43 Ralph M. Coury. “Who ‘Invented’ Egyptian Arab Nationalism? Part I”. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, volume 14. No. 3. August 1982. 249-281.

44 Nehru, *Discovery*, xxv, xxvi.

45 Gamal Abdel Nasser. *President Gamal Abdel-Nasser’s Speeches and Press Interviews. October-December 1960 (Info. Dept. UAR Cairo)*, 85-86.

46 Nasser, *Speeches October-December 1960*, 102/107.

patchwork, of “four hundred million separate men and women, each differing from the other, each living in a private universe.”⁴⁷ No nation, he held, is an “anthropomorphic entity”, but is made of “diversities and divisions”.⁴⁸ This “social imaginary” differs from socialist “development” in Nasser’s contention that “Arab Unity” has “passed the stage of needing evidence” and is “identified with Arab existence itself”.⁴⁹ That is, we exit a sociological politics in favour of ontological claims to political allegiance.

Nasser’s “inside” is only mythically homogenous, instead containing multiple inside/outside power relations (gender, religion, class). The geometric imagining of the *Charter* occludes pluralistic “lifeworld” realities. The domestic “enemies” are Egyptian capitalists, feudalists, and traitors, unified imaginatively within the “conspiracy” category whose discursive roots can be traced to the iconic 1793 French revolutionary Terror.⁴⁸ Nehruvian socialism was grounded in a concept of universal human belonging, in this way being closer to the Soviet ideology inspired however distantly by Marxian sociology. With Nasserite socialism, by contrast, the target ceases to be sociologically conceived: the unchecked economic and political power of the richest 1 % (i.e., unchecked capital accumulation logic), yields to cultural enemies (i.e., foreigners, dissident intellectuals, and journalists, or autonomous civil society generally) as a fifth column. The departure from a sociological politics entails a purely cultural imagining of the nation. Nasser’s 1962 *Charter* narrativized Egypt’s modern history, explaining Arab Socialism as the guiding national ideology, and committing Egypt to a modernization programme based on the Arab Socialist Union (1962-78).⁴⁹ Its indebtedness to Soviet ideology is merely superficial. Explaining Egypt’s post-1952 “developmental” experiment, its declared mission concerns the “free man’s struggle throughout history for a better life, free of the chains of exploitation

47 Nehru, *Discovery*, 423.

48 Fernée, *EV*, 52-106.

49 Goldschmidt, 170-72.

and underdevelopment in all their material and moral forms".⁵⁰ Its socialist concept of "underdevelopment" derives from Soviet ideals of revolutionizing labour's material conditions, but it has relinquished the broad ideal of a universal humankind in favour of a narrower identitarian politics of being.

Nasserism attempted a historical repetition, without acknowledging the changed historical horizon of Egypt's intervening "national transition". Free Officer power seizure lacked practical blueprints, only Nasser's one-man pantheon in Muhammad Ali, who had "tried to regain the place among nations that [Egypt's] millennia of history allows it to demand", to "break with a past of national humiliation", and incarnate Egypt's "will to power".⁵¹ Egyptian nationalist and sometimes Pan-Islamist Muhammad Farid (1868-1919) defined the misused "cultural disease" metaphor: "This European disease has spread to Egypt", describing class conflict as an "avoidable malady" afflicting Egypt's "stable and cohesive social order", rather than tensions inherent in capitalist industrialism.⁵²

Military Experience and the Failure of Civilian Power

If we want to understand why Nasser embraced this aspect of Nahda, rather than its other more democratic streams, we must recognize the gravity of a failure of civilian power in Egyptian experience leading up to the 1952 coup. Public disillusionment haunted pre-1952 Egypt over the corrupt and failing post-1919 parliamentary system. The population was also haunted by the military failings in the 1947-49 Palestine war. Let's consider the military trauma first. The Free Officers, children of Egypt's 1919 revolution, grew up idolizing Zaghlul and the Wafd, yet shifted

50 Nasser, *Charter*, 195.

51 Daly, M.W. ed. *The Cambridge History of Egypt. Volume 2: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 334.

52 Benin/Lockman, 55.

from civilian to military politics. Aflaq persuaded Nasser of the wisdom of the Egypt-Syria fusion in 1955.⁵³ The illiberal currents inspiring Aflaq, Syrian Baath Party founder, in Bergson, Nietzsche, Proudhon and Sorel, insufficiently explain Nasser's authoritarian drift. The schoolboy Nasser had embraced the Palestinian cause while studying Voltaire, Rousseau, Hugo, and Dickens, celebrants of civilian power, while also viewing Shakespeare's Julius Cesare as a "revolutionary hero".⁵⁴ The evidence suggests that Nasser might have embraced either civilian or military paths.

On July 10, 1948, in Rafah, on the eastern border of the Gaza Strip, Nasser commanded an Egyptian unit bloodily destroyed by Israeli forces. He could "only remain an impotent spectator".⁸⁴³ The following day, Nasser took a bullet fired into his car. Hospitalized, neither military nor hospitals functioned. The Egyptian army, with its first combat experience in the 1948 Palestine war, was abandoned to defeat, ill prepared with faulty equipment. Lives were sacrificed for King Farouk's scheming: 150 000 Arab combatants were demolished by smaller but well-equipped, organized, ideologically purposeful and internationally backed Israeli forces. The battle experience – not ideology - persuaded the Free Officers to fundamentally transform Egyptian military and society. Nasser's dying comrade, Ahmad 'Abd al-'Aziz, told him the "biggest battlefield is in Egypt".⁵⁵ The military trauma was transposed to a national level in Nasser's personal experience.

Nasser's *Philosophy of Revolution* described a transnational mosaic: "We were fighting in Palestine but our dreams were in Egypt ... I remember the days I spent in the trenches pondering over our problems ... What is happening in Palestine is but a

53 Charles Saint-Prot. *Le Nationalisme Arabe: Alternative à L'intégrisme* (Paris: Ellipses, 1998), 25.

54 Legrand, 22, 12-14.

55 Gordon, *Blessed*, 45.

miniature picture of what is happening in Egypt".⁵⁶ The 1948 Deir Yassine massacre – 254 villagers massacred by Menahem Begin to force Palestinian exodus, leaving dying women and children amidst carnage – determined Nasser's apocalyptic justice battle.⁵⁷ Military power became a metaphor for organizing civilian life. Nasser compounded military and revolutionary ideals to explain the 1952 Egyptian revolution, in a voice of self-doubt:

"... the revolution of July 23rd was the realization of a hope that dangled before the eyes of the people of Egypt since they began, in modern times, to think of governing themselves ... If what took place on July 23rd was only a military mutiny and not a popular revolt, why was the army then, apart from any other forces, destined to carry out this revolution? Throughout my life I have had faith in militarism. The soldier's sole duty is to die on the frontiers of his country. Why then was our army compelled to act in the capital and not on the frontier?"⁵⁸

The military turned inward, remoulding Egypt along socialist lines. A member of Party Secretariat recalls: "Nasser always took the side of the poor and the downtrodden on every issue that I had the chance to see him take a decision".⁵⁹ Yet, the Nasserite experiment excluded Egypt's popular masses from organized and participatory power, reorganizing society in the image of a war machine. We therefore must not underestimate the conjunctural specificity of the militarisation of ideological power in the Egyptian Nasserite context, linked to a reciprocal imaginary sustained in the conflict with the new Israeli state. Zionism fused British imperialism and "a divine promise to be fulfilled". An inessential expression of the 19th century Jewish "lifeworlds", it served as a British colonial divide and rule instrument. Zionism as a "social imaginary" conforms

⁵⁶ Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *The Philosophy of Revolution* (Cairo: Mondiale Press, 1959), 12-13.

⁵⁷ Legrand, 24.

⁵⁸ Nasser, *Philosophy*, 18

⁵⁹ Rushdi Said. *Science and Politics in Egypt: A Life's Journey* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2004), 153.

to a deadly universal template of violent othering. The Bible becomes a narrative of one oppressed nation in a liberation struggle, religiously mandated to colonize (as David Ben-Gurion put it) “an infested hotbed of pain”.⁸⁵⁰ The ethnic cleansing of Palestinians fulfilled a divine scheme, linking the Bible, the Holocaust, and the 1948 War. The massive Palestinian exodus, the martyrization of millions, in turn, was the defining imaginative icon of Nasser’s “Arab Nation”. Nasser combined the cause of the oppressed with the militarized organicism of perpetual wartime emergency. Israeli military aggression against Palestine produced conjunctural pressures which amplified the probability of the Egyptian embrace of militarily imagined Arab nationalism. Egyptian Muslims and Copts had rarely identified as Arabs, invoking pharaonic common culture. World War I Arab nationalism - in British-backed Syrian and Arabian rebellions against Ottomanism – alarmed Egyptians seeking Ottoman delivery from British occupation.⁶⁰

The martyrization of Palestine sharpened the inside/out military imagining. The boundedly pure identity of martyrdom had not characterized earlier imaginings in Palestinian nationalist upsurge. The anti-colonial roots of the Palestinian national struggle, recorded in *Mir’at al-Sharq* newspaper, were no simple encounter between two adversarial movements, Israel and Palestine, but a multi-faceted entanglement of transnational dynamics. In the early-mid 1920s, the Arab World and Turkey inspired Palestinian nationalists, especially events shaking Egypt and Syria. Across the Sinai desert in Egypt was a model for reconciling Palestine’s fractured national movement, improving Palestine’s Education Department, or developing a plurality of national cultural institutions. That is, the ideological region of density remained fixed upon civilian power as a national imaginary. The idea of an independent polity in Palestine was less coagulated than is routinely assumed during

60 Goldschmidt, 127.

the early-mid 1920s. Palestinians proposed political unification with Egypt, Syria, Jordan as well as Turkey.⁶¹

The military failure and ideological reciprocity with Israel were conjunctural aspects. It is unlikely that military power would have become a metaphor for social life had there not been also a deeper failure of civilian power in Egypt at the structural level, a negation of popular aspirations which requires explanation in terms partly of failed leadership and partly of colonial occupation. The experiences of military and civilian power failure, conjointly, sowed the seeds of a mistrust of disunity as a source of national failure. Nasser proclaimed:

“Disunity was the main cause of what we suffered in 1948. The unity we talked about at the time was a false unity, for if there are many currents and trends, especially in the political field ... success can never find its way. ... No individual will be able to deviate from the path set out by this people for the sake of achieving a true political and social freedom”.⁶²

Many Egyptian intellectuals ascribed abuses perpetrated in violation of democracy to defectiveness in the Constitutional system itself, upon grounds of ontological difference, rather than sociological analysis of cause-consequence.⁶³ The 1952 July Revolution amalgamated Egypt's 1940s identity-based revolt against “modernity”, and the Soviet argument against the “bourgeois” limits of the Autonomy of Science. This is why Nasser's conjuncturally specific Pan-Arab nationalism followed an organicist thread, seeking to “eradicate the existing paradoxes in society”.⁶⁴ His Arab

61 Zachary J. Foster. “Arabness, Turkey and the Palestinian National Imagination in the Eyes of Mir'at al-Sharq 1919-1926”. *Jerusalem Quarterly* 42. 61-79 (2010).

62 Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews. January-December 1961* (Info. Dept. UAR Cairo), 34-35.

63 Nadav Safran. *Egypt in Search of Political Community. An analysis of the intellectual and political evolution of Egypt 1804-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 57.

64 Nasser, *Speeches October-December 1960*, 87.

Nationalism was “an eternal reality”, “created in this part of the world”, and destined to “remain here eternally”.⁶⁵ The pre-existing ontological “truth” of the Arab nation was “revealed” through war, the “natural” boundaries overcoming the “artificial” colonial boundaries, notably in the North Yemen War (1962-70).⁶⁶ Within the same discursive frame, Nasser recurrently referred to “Arab nationalism” as an “identical 800 year-old battle” going back to the “Crusades”, indistinguishable in the “Napoleonic invasion” or the 1956 Franco-British-Israeli aggression, justifying the “natural” unity of Egypt, Syria and beyond.⁶⁷ Presented not as one “social imaginary” but an “inevitable” ontology, it justified the organic collapsing of military and civilian identity. A military “vanguard leads and instructs” the “whole people” based on a homogeneous group interest, while excluding “enemies”.⁶⁸ This legitimized control of the dialogic through press control “run by boards of directors” and abolishing political parties to eliminate “partisanship”.⁶⁹

It is in this context that we can understand the meaning of Albert Hourani’s contention that the “vast and continuing public acceptance” of Nasserism in many Arab countries was based on “personality” and:

“... regime successes – the political victory of the Suez crisis of 1956, the building of the High Dam, the measures of social reform – and the promise of strong leadership in defence of the Palestinian cause: all these seemed to hold out the hope for a different world, of a united Arab

65 Nasser, *speeches, January-December 1961*, 97.

66 Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *President Gamal Abdel-Nasser’s Speeches and Press Interviews. January-December 1963* (Info. Dept. UAR Cairo), 200-205.

67 Nasser, *Speeches, October-December 1960*, 47.

68 Nasser, *Speeches, January-December 1963*, 181. / *January-December 1961*, 70.

69 Nasser, *Speeches, January-December 1961*, 219. / *Speeches, January-December 1963*, 241.

nation rejuvenated by genuine social revolution and taking its rightful place in the world".⁷⁰

Hourani writes, "even at its highest point, the regime did not succeed in canalizing all of the political forces of the Egyptian people".⁷¹ That is, even though the Nasserite regime embodied monumental action, there was no space for autonomous and pluralistic public action under the dictatorship linked to an organicist national imagining. The Egyptian army suffered low popular prestige after the Palestine defeat. Revival of prestige was the road to one-party dictatorship, a praetorian elite rooted in the officer corps, controlling state bureaucracy, unwilling to open the political process. The first president and popular general Mahomed Naguib's (1952-54) bid for a pluralist polity, an open public competition (RCC, Wafd, Muslim Brothers, Communists), was stymied.⁷² Only by groping darkly did the Nasser regime realize its ideological identity, compounding Pan-Arabism, and, following Nehru in 1955, a "third way".

The Demise of "Networks": Converging Ideological, Political and Economic Sources of Power

Reliable public information ceased, sealing a system of silence. Nasser became President of Egypt in 1956. The year 1960 was the height of Nasser's "development" experiment, with the onset of the construction of the Aswān High Dam. The Nasser regime's major "institutional-capability" nevertheless remained military, entailing civic institution-building neglect, producing a catalytic loop that thwarted those potential civil society formations demonstrating a public political life independent of the state. The 1954 "crisis of the intellectuals", in which dissident intellectuals were systematically

70 Albert Hourani. *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 407.

71 Hourani, 407.

72 Solé, 225-226.

persecuted, was represented by the regime as the “failure of the liberal intelligentsia, rooted in the old regime mindset, to embrace the revolution”.⁷³ A ruling party punishes the population for failing to embrace it. With failed 1954 assassination, revolutionary allies had been crushed (i.e., Muslim Brotherhood, Communists). Official newspapers depicted Nasser beating back a two-headed dog. No legal opposition survived the 1954 show trials.⁷⁴ The law became an instrument for imposing the façade of public consensus. False testimony and confessions confirmed lack of any reliable information, marring informed public choices sustaining the possibility of people’s rule.

When Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal (“the jugular of the Empire”) in 1956, the resulting Israeli-British-French attack left Port-Said in burned ruins. Repelled by Soviet atomic threats, the symbolic Egyptian victory enthused the masses. The time was propitious. Nasser became president in an uncontested national referendum.⁷⁵ British forces withdrew in 1956, following the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian agreement. By 1958 the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.) encompassed Syria, where, waving to the Damascene crowds from an art deco balcony, Nasser declared it “the happiest moment of my life”.⁷⁶ By 1960, monumental successes ratified the organic linkage of Nasserite myth, against demands for education, employment, and social security, under foreign occupation and basic food shortage.⁷⁷ Popular enthusiasm in 1960 was followed by the catastrophic 1967 Six Day War.

How was the Nasserite “social imaginary” institutionally embedded? Nasser’s 1960 lecture to the Indian Parliament on “true democracy” followed one failed corporatist political experiment (the Liberation Rally 1953-58), and a second (the National Union

73 Gordon, *Blessed*, 156, 178.

74 Goldschmidt, 153. / Gordon, *Blessed*, 180.

75 Gordon, *Blessed*, 187-89, 157-8.

76 Legrand, 51.

77 Gordon, *Blessed*, 82-83.

1958-61) would collapse within one year. These experiments were in vertical and top-down national political organization, rejecting power-sharing in favour of demobilizing autonomy, harnessing collective energy in organized corporatist blocks. The strategy emphasized indoctrination over dialogue, loyalty to leadership before rule of law. The Liberation Rally, sloganized in "Unity, Liberty and Work", regularly launched mass pro-regime demonstrations. Its partial co-option of the labour movement, through the Cairo Transport Workers Union, gave Nasser victory in his extended struggle with General Mohammed Naguib in 1954.

The Liberation Rally and the National Union failed because universal, compulsory membership deprived citizens of personal pride or advantage in identification with the organization.⁷⁸ Imposed "hegemony" as *symbolic spectacle* negates the Autonomy of Science, where "hegemony" involves interacting networks, multiple indeterminate freedoms, and Sen's "positional objectivity". The National Union experiment with a government-sponsored, one-party corporatist block failed to take root among the population, screening and nominating candidates for election to the National Assembly. When the 1958 Constitution was abrogated (the third following 1952 and 1956), Egypt was bereft of representative body.⁷⁹ Neither the Liberation Rally nor the National Union established precedents. They didn't influence crucial regime decisions: the nationalization of the Suez Canal, unity with Syria, or the Socialist decrees. No public debate or communication produced these decisions. Organicist state and democratic transitions excluded the rooting of participatory institutions. The "citizenship achievement" is built on public communication.

The Arab Socialist Union (1962) was another failed "hegemonic" experiment in "popular organization". Maintaining the universal membership principle, graded membership was

⁷⁸ Waterbury, 315.

⁷⁹ Donald N. Wilber. *United Arab Republic: Egypt, its people and society* (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1969), 147-149.

the operational dynamic, hierarchically organizing a vanguard.⁸⁰ Although technically voluntary, membership was a condition for eligibility for appointment or election to any cooperative board, local, regional, or national assembly, or any union or professional association. The right to exercise a profession, i.e., journalism, was dependent on membership. The ASU provided “capabilities” (i.e., facilities, upward mobility, aspirations) to a closed elite. Only peasants or urban informal sector workers bypassed membership non-detrimentally. The ASU empowered Egyptian citizens more than the Liberation Rally or National Union, but through upward mobility and obedience to the one party-state which set major social goals.

The Nasserite experiment was a rupture with the 1882 Urabi legacy, as the engendering of a mass labour movement based on multiple autonomous organizations. Sporadic strikes from 1882 paved the way to widespread trade union formation by the turn of the century. The 1890s economic expansion, gathering momentum after the 1904 Anglo-French entente, spurred mass worker activism, in Polanyi’s “double movement” template.⁸¹ Egypt’s 1919 revolution embodied the Egyptian nationalist transcendence of legal methods of struggle, in favour of mass worker agitation. The upper-class conservative leadership did not adequately respond with effective mobilization strategies, despite mass enthusiasm for the Wafd in 1919.⁸² This disjuncture gradually undermined the civilian leadership/mass linkage, instigating organizational collapse in the national movement. This provided the opening for the 1952 Free Officer coup, which broke with Egypt’s “national transition”, seeking to master those mass energies through a one-party organicist state, narrowing the public choice framework.

The 1967 June War compounded economic problems with political crisis. Nasser misled the Arab masses to expect Egyptian

80 Waterbury, 313-14.

81 Benin, Lockman, 48.

82 Benin, Lockman, 89.

victory. Israeli pre-emptive strikes had already destroyed Egyptian airpower on the ground. The official narrative screened battlefield reality. Parents lost their children for a second time when the truth surfaced. Military excursions in Yemen and Palestine drained Egypt's economy, producing dependence on communist countries and Saudi Arabia, forcing complete reorientation of Egypt's geopolitical profile in terms of U.S. linkages and rapprochement with Israel. We see the draining impact of military power as a nation-making region of density.

In 1968, public silence cracked in a revelation of the popular desire for autonomous political action. For the first time since the 1954 March crisis, workers and students demonstrated independently of the regime's mobilizing organization, demanding an end to secret intelligence and teachers' surveillance, and laws guaranteeing political freedom.⁸³ The cumulative national transition, forced underground, resurfaced. Nasser met the leaders to make promises that were revealed in time to be empty. The Free Officers purportedly prepared to restore "sound parliamentary life".⁸⁴ The Egyptian population demanded a democratic government, with the civil liberties and self-rule enshrined in the 1923 Constitution, the popular demands of Egypt's 1919 revolution. Free elections would have empowered the Wafd Party, which appealed to rural landlords, capable of forcing tenant farmers and hired labour to vote for its candidates. This would extend corruption and disorder, Nasser insisted. Egypt required dictatorial leadership.⁸⁵ The "feudalists", "reactionaries", or "merchants of religion" would gain ascendancy.⁸⁶ Free Officer rule by decree angered the educated elite, the press, the labour unions, and foreigners.⁸⁷ All alliances were ruptured, all power concentrated in the RCC.

83 Goldschmidt, 182-185.

84 Gordon, *Blessed*, 9.

85 Goldschmidt 148.

86 Gordon, *Blessed*, 9.

87 Goldschmidt, 148.

If we look back now, the most far-reaching materialisation of Nasser's "Arab Nation" was the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.). Uniting Egypt and Syria, this militarist-populist compound lasted four years. The U.A.R. (1958-61) was a dispersed spiritual homeland, rather than the nation-state unit. It claimed all Arab countries of the Middle East, in a consensual unification process: "I am not seeking to build an empire. I intend to help a nation to achieve self-consciousness. I have no design to impose a yoke upon anyone against their wishes".⁸⁸ Nasserite Arab "self-consciousness", ontologically pre-existing, entailed militarized unification and rule by a one-party state. Egyptian administrators, technocrats, and accountants poured into Syria, "as though it were their latest colony".⁸⁹

The Eclipse the Rule of Law

Apparently arbitrary, a consistent stifling of independent networks – that is, a negation of civil society or the autonomy of science principle - was manifest in the compound of one-party state and military rule. After suspending constitutional rule, in 1953, all political parties were banned, and their funds confiscated. In 1955, the entire system of Shari'a courts was abolished, depriving traditional Islamic authorities of a power base. In 1956, the new constitution defined the Egyptian state as "Islamic". All independent network power was eliminated, in a catalytic self-reproduction privileging regime survival. The "determination to assert absolute authority" involved crushing "all independent bastions of opposition to their rule: the army, the press, professional associations, labor union, and universities".⁹⁰ It culminated in the 1953 *Kafir al Dawwar* strike and the crushing of Egypt's Left. Nasser's top-down socialism, after

88 Legrand, 57.

89 Goldschmidt, 155-56.

90 Gordon, *Blessed*, 5, 93, 31.

1955, derived from Tito's Yugoslavian model, while disdaining the central socialist pillar in secularism.⁹¹

The socialist utopia could morph into an Islamist one: all utopia is fundamentally empty. The *Philosophy of Revolution* (1953) declared: "The pilgrimage should be a great political power ... When my mind travels to the 800 million Muslims in Indonesia (there are) tremendous potentialities for cooperation (and) limitless power".⁹² After the 1961 Syrian break, Nasser had lamented attempted reconciliation with the bourgeoisie, while finding consolation in Lenin having also once done so. With the Socialist Charter, Nasser proclaimed: "we have no other alternative but to liquidate them by arresting all of them".⁹³ We see the organicist-class war fusion based on what becomes a random violence. The constructive overcoming of class injustice should not be confused with the crushing of organized networks in state-survival logic. Such violence already had its precedent in prior regime actions. After 1953, with political parties dissolved, parliament disbanded, and the Constitution suspended, war upon the judiciary had commenced – thereby eliminating a potential vehicle for remaking class relations through the rule of law. Institutions securing property rights (i.e., judicial institutions) were thereby obliterated.

Much the same logic of random violence extended to the management of economic power. The Nasserite elite, untrained as economists, made crisis-response decisions. Nasser explained to journalists that "he did not act", but "only reacted to the moves of others".⁹⁴ Until the 1956 Suez War, RCC and the private sector endured an uneasy standoff. Private industrial investment stagnated and fell, companies investing in real estate and dividends. Yet from

91 Rami Ginat. *Egypt's Incomplete Revolution. Lutfi al-Khuli and Nasser's Socialism in the 1960s* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 1-9.

92 Nasser, *Philosophy*, 71.

93 Hamied Ansari. *Egypt, the Stalled Society* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 88.

94 Goldschmidt, 164, 148.

1953-54 state-private sector concessions surpassed any pre-1952 regime, with incentives to domestic and foreign investment (i.e., the 1953 Mining and Quarrying Law). It was no “anti-capitalist” politics. The Egyptian private sector yet remained sceptical and foreign investors fearful. In 1958, the RCC frontally attacked the private sector, extending the total control template. Pre-1952 sugar baron (requiring state protection) and High Aswan dam builder (needing state investment), old and new bourgeoisie, both were viewed as potential agents of foreign adversaries. Communists likewise required suppression. Private investment from domestic sources declined from £E 80 million per year in 1952 to £E 40 million in 1956. Foreign investment totalled only £E 8 million (\$20 million) between 1954 and 1961, mostly in petroleum.⁹⁵ Private sector asset risk adversity provoked forcible state seizure of private resources. In 1960, the regime nationalized Bank Misr and the Central Bank in the largest single privatizations (Bank Misr controlled 20 % of Egypt’s industrial output and over half the textile industry). Initial nationalizations, from 1961, encompassed every sector from cotton to foreign trade. Capital flight represented the single largest drain on the Egyptian economy.

Systemic power checks vanished with expanding executive powers. Asset seizure to mobilize capital for productive investment spanned the 1960s, crippling Egypt’s economy. Mubarak’s autocratic legacy was secured. The Socialist Charter of the Arab Socialist Union (1962-78) initiated a new upward mobility principle empowering official party members. It fostered an inside/outside dynamic on the Soviet pattern. Fifty percent of all seats in elective bodies were reserved for the delegates of nebulously defined peasants and workers. The Stalinist method, meanwhile, extended to feudalists and capitalists.⁹⁶ Nasserite Egypt recreated the second circle of

95 Tamir Moustafa. *The Struggle for Constitutional Power law, politics, and economic development in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 95.

96 Ansari, 88-89.

violence and progress. Groping to exit crises-response, restrictions on political freedoms became normalized in negation of the 1935 Autonomy of Science principle.

Ramilla Square: India and Egypt within One Destiny

Forty-one-year-old Nasser reached India on March 29, upon Nehru's invitation, also visiting Pakistan.⁹⁷ Nasser's 1960 Ramilla Square rally, in New Delhi, envisioned Egyptian and Indian experiences within a unified "developmental" frame:

"India and the United Arab Republic have a lot in common. Both nations won their independence after years of domination. Both countries have enormous difficulties to overcome in the field of economic reform".⁹⁸

Nasser informed the Indian press: "the great experiment going on in India for development" is doubled in Egypt, as "we, too, are going through the same experience".⁹⁹ This underlined Indian-Egyptian solidarity in protecting independence by equalling erstwhile colonial masters. Tagore had warned about this crossroad in new power horizons. Nasser described Egypt meeting India "every day, on the path leading to our future aspirations".¹⁰⁰ The declaration of unity does not survive rational scrutiny. Nehru's modernist "social imaginary" depended upon Tagore and Ambedkar, pathbreaking "lifeworld" visions, forged between the 1905 Swadeshi Movement, the socialist struggle against 1930s Fascism, and comparisons of the American Civil War (1861-65) with India's Dalit freedom struggle. All of these precedents centrally emphasised the circulatory relationship linking individual capabilities to a broader system of institutional capabilities, manifested in the ideological pluralism

97 Legrand, 56.

98 Nasser, *Speeches March-June 1960*, 26.

99 Nasser, *Speeches March-June 1960*, 26.

100 Nasser, *Speeches. March-June 1960*, 1.

of a dynamic civil society and a social state guaranteeing social and political rights.

Nasser drew from the authoritarian streams of the Nahda tradition. The vision is revealed in Nasser's citing of the 1921 Italian surrealist play by Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, as a central ideological influence. The play features six fictional characters searching for their maker, where "each personal reality must be respected as if God-sent".¹⁰¹ Perception is the only reality. Nasser's *Philosophy of Revolution* recounts personal fall, guilt, and rebirth, a sublimated confession of the Palestine trauma. Nasser's personal destiny reflects "eternal" Egypt, a "single-minded struggling people" for "whom faith is the secret force by which we have always overcome our enemies" unchanged since "Napoleon invaded Egypt".¹⁰² When we measure Nasser's written reflections against the yardstick of the Autonomy of Science debate in Moscow, we see him adopting the distinctively Soviet modernist ideological construction of "freedom" echoing Bukharin's 1935 Autonomy of Science debate with Polanyi:

"It is an indisputable fact that the political system of any state is but a direct reflection of the prevailing economic state of affairs and an accurate expression of the interests controlling this economic state. If feudalism is the economic power prevailing in a certain state, then undoubtedly political freedom in that state can mean nothing more than freedom for feudalism ... The same applies when economic power is in the hands of exploiting capital."¹⁰³

Freedom, as such, is valueless, now and today. The autonomy of plural social networks lacks the inherent value affirmed by – from diverse and even conflicting perspectives - Polanyi, Tagore, Ambedkar, Gandhi, and Nehru. It is an illusion, the phantom

101 Luigi Pirandello. *Six Personnages en Quête d'auteur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), 40.

102 Nasser, *Speeches. October-December 1960*, 185.

103 Nissim Rejwan. *Nasserist Ideology. Its Exponents and Critics* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974), 38.

expression of power, as in the base-superstructure conception of law and culture. It will become meaningful only once that power has been destroyed by what Aflaq defined – in a comparable ideological construct – as the Revolutionary Stage: following a coup (e.g., the 1963 Syria Coup), the party would dismantle the previous political system, erasing all vestiges of resistance or rival power, permitting the advent of the Transitional Stage where the Party – having eliminated all rivals – is now free to forcefully modernize over a duration of time through land redistribution, the empowerment of women, and educational and social reforms. These are noble ends, but the means are authoritarian. Through this authoritarian scheme, the Egyptian nation would become prosperous and powerful while retaining its cultural heritage unblemished by difference.

Nasser told Indians that “that the idea of Arab Nationalism is the most powerful driving force in events in our country”, “the motive for the establishment of the United Arab Republic”. It rested, firstly, upon the “unity of consciousness, which is represented in the unity of history”, and, secondly, the “unity of thought, which is represented in the unity of language”.¹⁰⁴ This echoed Kemalism and its debt to Comtean ideology.¹⁰⁵ Nasser reproduced the Kemalist practice of forcible minority assimilation and expulsion. Minority persecution for a higher “national” good had been transnational common-sense throughout the first half of the 20th century. In Ramlila Maidan, Nasser recalled the 1956 war, repeating Nehru’s message:

“... if imperialism succeeded in returning to Egypt, it would not stop there, and would continue its attempt to put the clock back. Imperialism would imagine that it could return to every country in Asia and Africa from which it had been forced to leave”.¹⁰⁶

Nehru’s cabled words (“This is a reversal of history which none

104 Nasser, *Speeches March-June 1960*, 1-19.

105 Fernée, *EV*, 196-244.

106 Nasser, *Speeches March-June 1960*, 1-19.

of us can tolerate”) testify to Polanyi’s “double movement” as the structural mechanism underpinning the regime actions of both India and Egypt, however differently their paths unfolded under the pressures of distinctive national movement legacies and geopolitical conjunctures.¹⁰⁷

A New Age of Information War

Colonial administrator Cromer championed the unveiling of Egyptian women, linking feminism to colonialism. He was the president of the Men’s League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage in England.¹⁰⁸ The manipulation of symbols portended the new age of information war. A keen chess player, Nasser confronted Israel and two imperialist powers in defence of the Suez Canal, Palestinian pressure to dictate policy to Jordan’s King Hussein, Syrians in Arab Nationalist parties besieged by CIA and communist usurpers.⁸¹² The atomic age was dissolving territorial wholes, mobilizing myth through media-led particles. The 1954 Israeli attempt to bomb Egypt’s Rio Cinema, to destabilize the Nasserite government, while blaming the Muslim Brotherhood, exemplifies geopolitical information war through subterfuge of truth.¹⁰⁹ Nasser embraced the sea of fiction pervading the modern politics of information war. Free Officer power seizure began with official manipulation of the press, publishing glorified take-over accounts, and fabricating opponents’ activities. The “propaganda machine ran at full speed, creating new heroes and occasions for revelry”, the “censor deleted criticism”, while the ruling Command Council of the Revolution (1952-54) outlawed political parties without a viable political alternative.¹¹⁰

Following the 1952 coup, the Cinema Metro in Cairo reopened

107 M.K. Akbar. *Nehru. The Making of India* (Delhi: Roli, 2002), 501.

108 Ahmed, 153.

109 Legrand, 39.

110 Gordon, *Blessed*, 85.

with *Quo Vardis*, the burning of Rome doubling the Cairo Fire. A Surrealistic current guided this unchecked construction of a parallel truth in Egypt's state-democratic transition. Nasser loved Tewfik al-Hakim's celebration of the 1919 revolution, *Return of the Spirit* (1927).¹¹¹ It celebrates the "leader as artist".¹¹² Nasser said: "The scientific and technical achievements of humanity have created new conditions", rendering "colonialism and racial discrimination outdated", and making "man the real master of his destiny".¹¹³ However, for Nasser science had an instrumental value "for driving the wheel in the economic and social struggle", while "Art is more prominent in the moral mobilisation necessary for driving the wheel in the political struggle". There was ultimately "no separation in the roles of Art and Science", the basis for a mythic politics which subverted humble sociological approximation.¹¹⁴ Nasser grasped the fusion of military and ideological powers, despite the ideological vacuum in the system of silence. And this perennial emergency is the absolute opposite of the "scientific temper".

We thereby come closer to explaining the origins of President Hosni Mubarak's thirty-year state of emergency, following the assassination of Anwar Sadat, "a state of emergency that he never lifted, which gave the police and the security forces thirty years of impunity". Jeremy Bowen describes the regime as "defined by an ideology of stability, as measured by [Mubarak's] friends in the United States." It "upheld the unpopular peace treaty with Israel, and made sure that the armed forces kept their position as Egypt's most dominant institution." Meanwhile, parts of the economy which had been nationalised were now privatised, "which pleased economic liberals in the West and enriched a small class of Egyptian tycoons". Bowen writes that Egypt's "inadequate legal

111 Legrand, 14.

112 Tawfik al-Hakim. *Return of the Spirit* (Georgetown: Three Continents Press, 1990), 18.

113 Nasser, *Speeches. January-December 1961*, 118.

114 Nasser, *Speeches. October-December 1960*, 141.

system” resulted in a “burning sense of alienation from a system that enriched a small minority, and guaranteed a life of struggle and poverty to the majority”. The predominance of dictatorial military power and the crushing of civilian power reintegrated easily with the global system of capital favouring Western domination. Referring to 2011, Bowen concludes: “The only surprise is that a revolution did not happen sooner”.¹¹⁵

115 Jeremy Bowen. *The Arab Uprisings. The People want the Fall of the Regime* (London: Simon & Schuster), 48-50.

CHAPTER 8

The Nehruvian Ethic of Reconciliation: Experiment in breaking with the Second Circle of Violence and Progress

Consolidating Civilian Power

Four keys defined India's democratic consolidation of civilian power in the Nehru period: the unique Congress party position, elections, the primacy of the Constitution, and minority rights.¹ These institutionally grounded the "citizenship achievement" and "public action". Comparatively, Indian and Egyptian "development" experiences highlight: (1) the military's role in civilian politics, and, (2) the timing of peasant and industrial labour integration into organized national politics - a defining citizenship moment.² Two non-events define the absence of a military coup in the violent chaos of post-Partition India, and the absence of organized participatory institution-building in Nasser's Egypt. The Soviet one-party vanguard organically bound to the proletarian class (i.e., mythically dispensing with any need for "representation") was transferred to an

1 Ashutosh Varshney. *Battle's Half Won: India's Improbable Democracy* (Haryana: Penguin, 2013), 123.

2 Christopher Candland. *Labor, democratization and development in India and Pakistan* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 78-90.

organic unity between one-party vanguard and the entire Egyptian nation. This “purist” ideology was largely absent among principle Indian freedom struggle leaders.

Their view was exemplified in Ambedkar’s 1936 “network” theory of society: “nowhere is human society one single whole. It is always plural. In the world of action, the individual is one limit and society the other”. This follows John Dewey’s (1859-1952) 1916 question: “How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association?”³ Dewey and Ambedkar therefore participated in the 1935 Autonomy of Science debate. They explored ways of living together in difference. The Nehruvian shift from a mass movement (claiming to represent the nation) to a political party (within a competitive democratic system) was riven with instability, but it embraced the Ambedkarian vision of “relational” society. Ambedkar fully valued the communicative principle, despite understanding the need of organized legal force to make the powerful yield privilege in building a more just society. Preparing for the 1952 coup, by contrast, the Free Officers resolved to exclude all outsiders. The Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi struggled to include Hindus, Muslims and the all-India population in an everyday public struggle based on testimony, witness and recognition. The structure of the post-independence Indian state was significantly forged by a well-organized but widely inclusive mass movement.

The eclipse of Nehru’s prestige with defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War was survived by a functioning legal apparatus of civilian democratic rule. The Nehruvian system survived Nehru. By contrast, the eclipse in Nasser’s prestige with defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War saw the survival of Nasser as a symbol, but the complete undoing of tentative systems he had tried to build. Nasser failed to mould the Arab masses into effective political parties or

3 Ambedkar, *AOC*, 278.

movements. Following the humiliating defeat in the 1967 war, reacting to Judges' Association and the Lawyers' Syndicate demand for political and judicial reform, Nasser decreed judicial autonomy incompatible with the regime. Nasser's vision disappeared with his death.⁴

The Indian citizenship achievement is clearly unfinished at the military power level. At any moment, millions of Indians have lived under military rule – albeit, a civilian-ruled military that has broken the post-colonial military authoritarian norm. The experiences of Kashmir and the north-east suggest contexts for which nationalism, as such, has no solution but oppression. Populations, in the economic power realm, have been forced to sell labour at sub-sustenance levels, while labour law has prohibited the majority from bargaining collectively (i.e., they exist in the informal sector). This scandalously exemplifies structural violence, buttressed by political power, as millions of children grow up dangerously undernourished. India has experienced an economic three-track trajectory – the third track being tribal and other communities relegated to a non-person status in campaigns of organized capitalist profit. At the political power level, by contrast, India has achieved a single national track through universal franchise and the democratic system. This revolutionary post-colonial power transfer to the population explains regional redistributions of economic power through organized public action.

An alternative meaning and value paradigm differentiated Nehruism from the 20th century post-colonial “development” norm. Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) set a world precedent with the “biggest experiment in democracy in human history” – universal adult suffrage with a population only 16.6 % literate in 1951 - in

4 Mike Gonzalez/Houman Barekat eds. *Arms and the People. Popular Movements and the Military from the Paris Commune to the Arab Spring* (London: Pluto, 2013), 43.

culturally heterogeneous newly independent India.⁵ In contrast with West European, state socialist and other post-colonial societies, the driving principle of Nehruism was that economic development and political freedom were inextricably joined in democratic nation-making. Nehru called this an “experiment” without “parallel anywhere in the world.”⁶

Transnational Dialogues: Reconstructing the French Revolutionary Heritage

We cannot understand Nehruvian practice without explaining its indebtedness to the Gandhian circle of moral consideration, in which the French revolutionary legacy became reconstructed through the weight of small things. Mahatma Gandhi read about the French Revolution in prison, as he explained in the 1942 Quit India speech, where he also compared the experience of the Indian freedom struggle to the Russian Revolution. Addressing the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay to outline a plan of action, Gandhi reflected on comparative revolutions in terms of strategy and as a matter of practical ethics:

“I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle’s *French Revolution* while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by nonviolence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I invite you today.”⁷

5 Ramachandra Guha. *India After Gandhi: The History of the World’s Largest Democracy* (London: Picador, 2008), 147 / Chandra, et.al., 184.

6 Jawaharlal Nehru. *Selected Works 28* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984-1991), 32.

7 Brian MacArthur. *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches* (London: Penguin, 1995), 65.

Gandhi's lexical field – invoking history, revolution, democracy, individual autonomy, equality and freedom - identifies him within the Enlightenment tradition. It is the ideological aspect of the “history of equality”, identified by Piketty, which has formed a steady stream throughout this narrative. The centre of that tradition, however, is transformed. By recentring the Enlightenment tradition within *Ahimsa*, Gandhi envisions its possibilities upon a new revolutionary horizon – one beyond the inside/outside dichotomy that had always defined the European Enlightenment and made it an elitist construct. In its practical aspect the European Enlightenment had been an instrument of revenge, the space of a cleansing violence from which a society might make a leap into utopia. But violence is not cleansing. Instead, it triggers further spirals of uncontrolled violence that gain in intensity. Gandhi faced an adversary on two fronts: the tyrannical face of European modernity in Empire, and the communalist ideologies that – while professing to speak for an indigenous population – in fact borrowed their template from the European Enlightenment's doppelganger in nativist romanticism. If nationalism is not a unitary “discourse”, ubiquitously reproducing the logic of “modernity”, and it has no prior ontological whole, then imaginative components conjuncturally fuse into everyday temporal horizons. The imaginary horizon at Indian independence was apocalyptic, prone to military power, as Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) captured in 1948:

“The destruction caused by the first world war pales into insignificance as compared to the devastation and havoc resulting from the last world war and now with the discovery of the Atom Bomb one shudders to think of the pattern of future wars ... The weak and defenceless, in this imperfect world, invite aggression from others.”⁸

In a violently imperfect world, the passage suggests, only supreme violence survives and thrives. This outlook was the norm, and justified the primacy of military power in nation-making. As

8 Wolpert, 357.

an ideology, it contrasted with Nehru's Ethic of Reconciliation, with its central emphasis on the multi-centred political power of civil society. Nehru's emergence as topmost Indian leader was a monumental fortuity. No Indian nation-state existed before 1948. A vast national movement confronted a colonial state. Yet this mass movement shaped post-colonial political inclusivity through a principle of path dependency, determined by well organised mass participation over decades. What the leaders called Indian secularism is traceable through an inside/out edifice, centring the communicative principle of self-education through struggle. Mass mobilization broke down gender, caste, and religious taboos through common participation in a national movement, what we identified as the civil society principle, remaking the circle of moral consideration in the Indian "lifeworlds" as a new national imagining. Post-1920 Indian nationalism under Gandhi excluded ideological organicism in principle, faltering not infrequently in practice.

Gandhi was well aware of the strong counter-Enlightenment ideological currents circulating in Indian civil society at this time, identified with the new idioms of Hindutva and proto-Islamism coloured by the global spread of reactionary modernist discourses in the 1930s. This is what Gandhi meant when, in the same Quit India speech, he said "the Congress has kept itself meticulously free of the communal taint". He contrasted the divisiveness of "communalism" with the unifying force of nationalism: "The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule, when freedom is attained. The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it placed in the entrusted".⁹

Gandhi's selection of Nehru as successor was grounded in the value he saw in the "scientific temper": "While I admire modern science", Gandhi had written in October 1945, "I find that it is

9 MacArthur, 65.

the old looked at in the light of modern science which should be reclothed and refashioned aright ... I have, therefore, named you as my heir".¹⁰ It is in light of this comment that we must seek the specific meaning of the "scientific temper", as Nehru used it, as well as the larger significance of the term within a conjunctural constellation of comparable terms being employed in anti-colonial struggles around the world. We see its meaning in how Nehru adhered to Gandhian principles as the first Prime Minister of independent India (1947-64). Violent means "distorted the ends" in communist social transformation.¹¹ India had "won our independence through a bloodless revolution in conditions of honour and dignity both to ourselves and to the erstwhile rulers of our country". Therefore, Nehru said, "We in India today are children of this revolution and have been conditioned by it".¹²

Two other dominant political tendencies existed: Patel and Bose. Ashutosh Varshney has depicted the moment of independence as a striking multi-future scenario, in which India's post-independence could have resembled the one-party state model dominating Pakistan and much of the Middle East. In the 1930s-40s, Varshney explains, Bose and Patel were Nehru's serious competitors. The political system which might have evolved, had they dominated the 1940s and 50s, would have differed radically. Bose's authoritarianism saw a democratic and non-violent national movement as weak. Admiring fascist strength, he turned to Japan and Hitler's Germany as allies to overthrow British rule by force.¹³ Patel was popular. Although he died, a 3:1 ratio in favour of Patel-led conservatives in the Congress Working Committee reigned from the mid-1950s. The Left minority was forced to accept concessions. Patel envisioned banning trade unions. Opposing socialism, he favoured

10 Akbar, 469.

11 Jawaharlal Nehru. *Letters to the Chief Ministers. Volume 3* (New Delhi: OUP, 1989), 583.

12 Jawaharlal Nehru. *Selected Works 36* (Delhi: OUP, 1984-1991), 491.

13 Varshney, 59.

“the Hindu card”. Patel wanted Muslims staying in India to take an oath of allegiance, while adopting a Hindu culture. He favoured “deciding” war with Pakistan.¹⁴ These differences alternate possible political paths for post-independence India, some closer to Egypt’s Free Officer vision, in terms of the crushing of networks, and the centrality of violence. Had some accident changed the elite, mass-based Indian democracy might have been imperilled.¹⁵

We need to reflect upon the genuine risk of an ascendent military power in the Indian independence struggle. Bose, in 1943, formed an Indian government in exile in Singapore. Commanding the Indian National Army (INA), he threatened a virulent organicism. Composed of twenty thousand Indian officers and men captured by Japanese forces during the fall of Singapore, its militarized mass mobilization became a major political force. Bose proclaimed himself *Netaji* (leader on the Fuhrer model), seeking India’s liberation through military action. For Bose, Mussolini and Hitler represented the future. He wrote to the German government (1942): “I am convinced more than ever before that the Tripartite Powers [Germany, Italy and Japan] and India have a common destiny”.¹⁶ The battle between the British Indian Army (history’s largest volunteer army) and Bose’s Japanese-supported INA was a deciding moment in India’s post-independence. The non-professional and non-political army might have been eradicated in 1946, leading to military rule. Had Bose’s army successfully reached Calcutta and built its state upon Indian soil, a military-fascist compound could have vanquished civilian-political power in independent India.

Against these authoritarian tendencies that represented a norm in anti-colonial politics, Gandhi and Nehru had critical reservations

14 Akbar, 418, 454, 460, 488.

15 Varshney, 59.

16 Lloyd I. Rudolph/Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 70.

regarding state prestige and power very unusual for their time.¹⁷ Their non-violence principle produced a path-breaking “social imaginary” in post-independence Indian state-society dynamics. The Ethic of Reconciliation was a commitment to pluralist and non-interventionist solutions to the centre-state and civil society dilemmas in post-independence. Linguistic, regional, and minority conflicts were resolved by the state through a mediating role, endorsing self-reliance. Nehru hailed the “first time in the world’s history (that) a great political mass movement (was) wedded to (non-violent) ideals,” and contrasted this to “class conflict, hatred and violence.”¹⁸ Clearly, it was conceived transnationally in terms of the second circle of violence and progress, affirming the Autonomy of Science, because of the communicative principle of legalised citizenship and the multiplicity of independent civil society networks as the practical basis for nation-making.

The Gandhi-Nehru “social imaginary” therefore transnationally partook of the modern democratic Enlightenment and the French Revolution. At independence, Nehru invoked Gandhi’s legacy and the “great past of India”, as well as “modern precedents such as the French, American and Russian revolutions.”¹⁹ Nehru saw democratic roots requiring the autonomy of multiplicity – that is, the system requires an anti-system, to bolster public legitimacy and check actions and utterances. Nehru wrote: “it would be a good thing for opposition parties with constructive policies to grow up in India. Without any opposition there is always a tendency towards complacency and mental and moral deterioration”.²⁰ India’s uniquely heterogeneous nationalism – all-India identity overlain upon diversities of language, religion, caste and tribe – produced a hyper-mobilized, adversarial and chaotic democracy.

17 Akbar, 469.

18 Nehru, *Ministers 4*, 535.

19 Ramachandra Guha. *IAG*, 106.

20 Jawaharlal Nehru. *Letters for a Nation: From Jawaharlal Nehru to His Chief Ministers* (Delhi: Penguin, 2015), 106-7.

The Indian transition from mass movement to established state was a centrifugal moment, threatening state collapse and civil war. The independence hour was a whirlpool of atrocities painfully recalled as the Great War of South Asia. The divide/rule dynamic was Empire's structural legacy, from Egypt to Palestine and India. M.J Akbar, a Bihar Muslim and journalist, describes the "trains coming from Pakistan full not of refugees but of corpses and scattered, barely stirring bodies of survivors ... trains going towards Pakistan had their own horror stories to tell, and each day was more proof that no cruelty was beyond the human imagination".²¹ Nehru housed Muslim refugees during the 1947 Delhi riots. This explains his remark: "citizenship received more thought than any other article contained in the Constitution".²² Nehru perceived "the spirit of the age in favour of equality, though practice denies it almost everywhere".²³ At national independence, millions were fleeing their homes and crossing borders, a mass migration continuing until 1948, with a thousand applications from Muslim refugees per day.

The Gandhian freedom struggle had embraced the principle that identity is a choice, not ontological inevitability. Genocidal Partition violence annihilated any such choice, as 14 million people were displaced along religious lines in massive exchanges, among the largest population movements in recorded history. Over one million Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims were killed in widespread acts of organized violence (riots, massacres, raping women, hacking babies) in migrations across the new India-Pakistan border.²⁴ Although Nehru made "citizenship" the pivot of the state transition, alternative organicist social imaginaries denied any value to "citizenship" as a legal system of universally protected and shared rights, i.e., modern

21 Akbar, 424-425.

22 Niraja Gopal Jayal. *Citizenship and its Discontents: An Indian history* (Bangalore: Orient Blackswan, 2013), 57.

23 Nehru, *Discovery*, 580.

24 Akbar, 415.

equality. Excluding organicist ideologies (labelled “communalism”) defined Indian secularism under Gandhian leadership.²⁵

Gandhi explicitly speaks in the language of democratic nationalism on the eve of the Quit India movement: “Ever since its inception the Congress ... has thought always in terms of the whole nation and has acted accordingly...”. This is a reference to minority politics: “May be that the reins will be placed in the hands of the Parsis ... or they may be handed to some others whose names are not heard in the Congress today.”²⁶ Forgotten voices, such as Allah Bakhsh Soomro (1900-43), paid with their lives for Hindu-Muslim unity. Having organized an effective mass political opposition to the Muslim League in pre-Partition days, Allah Bakhsh, Sind Premier during the 1942 Quit India movement, was murdered in 1943, by professional killers, opening Muslim League entry into Sind.²⁷ Gandhi clearly envisions the Indian nation as a higher category of identity for all faith groups, its unifying power grown from common participation in a prolonged anti-colonial mass movement – and precisely this mass logic precludes the dismal outcome of post-independence military dictatorship:

“Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a nonviolent fight for India’s independence. In a violent struggle, a successful general has been often known to effect a military coup and to set up a dictatorship. But under the Congress scheme of things, essentially nonviolent as it is, there can be no room for dictatorship. A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself, he fights only for the freedom of his country.”²⁸

The Gandhian introduction of *Ahimsa* meant the overcoming of an ideologically fundamental inside/out template that had defined the European Enlightenment in its 17th and 18th century articulations. Gandhi’s overcoming, we shall see, rested upon a practical ethic of modesty. In the Quit India speech, Gandhi said:

25 Chandra et.al. *India’s Struggle*, 79.

26 MacArthur, 65.

27 Shamsul-Islam, chapters four and five.

28 MacArthur, 65.

“I know how imperfect our *Ahimsa* is and how far away we are still from the ideal, but in *Ahimsa* there is no final failure or defeat”.²⁹ This practical ethic of modesty, it turns out, is grounded in an alternative conception of time - where experiences of happiness, companionship, justice and liberty, citizenship, struggle, and recognition remain of ultimate value despite everything in existence being of limited duration. As Vyasa says in the *Mahabharata*, “every day brings us closer to destruction, to desert”.³⁰

Nehru’s Discovery of India: Enlightenment as a Plural and Open Process

It is therefore by extension that Nehru’s *Discovery of India* – while celebrating the Enlightenment - rejected inside/out Enlightenment modernism, affirming India’s history as de-centred, a many-cultured “adaptation of old ideas to a changing environment”, a “palimpsest” principle where “layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously”.³¹ This is a more Gandhian idea of time than mechanistic causality or Hegelian teleology. Nehru described the freedom struggle-era Congress as networks: “national” because “multi-religious”, with “no reason why the richness and variety of India’s cultural life should be regimented under a single pattern”.³² Nehru viewed the nation as a molecular patchwork, of “four hundred million separate men and women, each differing from the other, each living in a private universe,” not an “anthropomorphic entity” but a creation of “diversities and divisions”.³³

The Nehruvian pluralism underpinning his idea of socialism

29 MacArthur, 65.

30 Rovelli, Carlo. *The Order of Time* (London: Penguin, 2018), p. 178.

31 Nehru, *Discovery*, 51.

32 Nehru, *Discovery*, xxv, xxvi.

33 Nehru, *Discovery*, 423, 52.

differed from both the Utilitarian single definition of ‘interest’ and the Soviet concept of a homogeneous proletarian mass. Nehru believed it “was not possible to mobilize a large majority around a clear-cut, structured, ideological definition of socialism. A large majority could be mobilized only by uniting diverse interests and multiple views and ideological strands around a common socialist vision or framework”.³⁴ In sum, Nehru believed in practical ethics without the fixed ontology of identity that had defined the inside/out dichotomy of the European Enlightenment. These thoughts anticipate Amartya Sen’s “components” theory, where “identity” is a choice among multiple and conflicting transmitted components, a social imaginary rather than a pre-existing and whole ontology to be discovered.³⁵

When Nehru started writing the *Discovery of India* in 1944, the 1942 Quit India Campaign was receding. Gandhi had launched, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow said, “by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857”.³⁶ As Japan neared India’s borders, the Congress launched Quit India in 1942, a “mass struggle on non-violent lines”.³⁷ The communicative principle was essential to it. Gandhi urged Indians to “seek freedom, not power”, declaring how, “in this struggle, secrecy is a sin”.³⁸ Nehru similarly stressed the prolonged and everyday quality of this open and public politics:

“... that this action was not connected with violence, secret intrigue, and conspiracy, the usual accompaniments of revolutionary activity, did not make it less revolutionary ... it is easier to indulge in short violent bursts of courage, even unto death, than to give up, under the sole compulsion of one’s own mind, almost everything that life offers and carry on in this way day after day...”.³⁹

34 Bipan Chandra, Bipan, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya, Mukherjee. *India Since Independence* (Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 226-227.

35 Sen, *Argumentative Indian*, 290.

36 Townson, 688.

37 Akbar, 345.

38 Akbar, 347.

39 Nehru, *Discovery*, 405.

As countless Indians died from lack of food, shelter, and medical care, Nehru emphasised how this suffering from constant poverty was socially avoidable, not a feature of immutable fate. Nehru stated: "I hate poverty. My grievance against the British is that they have made Indians miserable, poverty-stricken wrecks of humanity."⁴⁰ These conditions underline the continuity with other 20th century social revolutions, each an expression of the "history of equality". It was the strategy that differed, the Tolstoy-Gandhian conception of progress as engendered by the decisions of anonymous everyday millions. Only the decisions and actions of citizen activists can prevent this institutionalised suffering: writing to parliamentary representatives, mass street demonstrations, or civil disobedience intended to force government to provide means for satisfying essential needs. Multi-cultural networks, not authentic identity, influenced Gandhi's statement: "the Congress does not believe in the domination of any group or community. It believes in democracy which includes in its orbit Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jews – every one of the communities inhabiting this vast country."⁴¹ An inclusive and plural circle of moral consideration defined Gandhi's vision, the source of the communicative principle and the challenge to the inside/out dichotomy of the European Enlightenment. As we have seen, it grows from a different conception of time. Let us now examine what that is in closer detail.

Nationalism: Ways and Means, Not Pre-set Definition

Gandhi shared Thoreau's view of change: "it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be".⁴² He wrote: "Our explorations should take place in the direction of determining not the definition

40 Nehru, *Discovery*, 405.

41 Akbar, 345-347.

42 Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849) in *The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writings* ed. Lawrence Buell (New York: Modern Library, 2006), 218-219.

of an undefinable term like *Swaraj* but in discovering the ways and means".⁴³ Gandhi's remark underlines that no fixed and antecedent definition of the Indian nation, as a bound and finished whole, had an existence prior to India's long struggle for national independence – as a day to day, week to week, month to month, and, ultimately, decade to decade process involving the organized but multi-centred agency of millions of Indians in all walks of life.

Gandhi's remark can be understood on two levels: (1) an anti-essentialist observation that cultural identities occur in time, there being no fixed and tensionless Indian identity outside of the flow of time, as in Orientalist eternal India. Nationalism without essence grounded Gandhi's conviction that Indian "national life is dependent on multi-religious existence".⁴⁴ Like Bhakti-Sufi traditions of multi-cultural cohabitation, "all religions ... proceed from the same God but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality".⁴⁵ Gandhi also therefore welcomed "conscientious atheists" as being of higher moral standing than "corrupt religious people".⁴⁶ The Gandhian vision of nationalism therefore differed from founding French Revolutionary principle, such as in Saint Just's insistence that "the nation has only one heart" and "the General Will can never harbour any element alien to itself".⁴⁷ Gandhi invoked "reason appealing to reason", a dialogic process without final closure because "no two men agree exactly on all points".⁴⁸ This communicative principle was the ground of the "scientific temper". (2) Gandhi's remark also conveys a more conjuncturally specific truth about anti-colonial nationalism, modern revolutions, the global capitalist structure

43 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* Volume 2, (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1992), 240.

44 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 241.

45 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* Volume 2, 132.

46 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 222-223.

47 Saint Just, *Oeuvres Completes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 529, 547, 532.

48 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* 2, 214, 169.

of inequality, and why the Indian experience represents a path-breaking difference in contemporary world politics. We shall call this distinctive feature the simultaneity theory.

Nationalism Without Essence: The Simultaneity Theory

The historian Bipan Chandra reiterates Gandhi's central contention about nationalism without essence in a dialectical theory of "simultaneity": "Nationalism does not precede the struggle for independence nor is the struggle dependent on the pre-existence of nation and nationalism". No essentialist antecedent identity preceded the creation of the Indian nation through decades of mass struggle for independence. The means to a just order of society, by this account, require no supremely antecedent truth or 'foundation', as when the 18th century French Enlightenment – portending the French Revolution – envisioned itself as a war of transcendental reason against the meaningless error defining the traditional past.

Chandra echoes Gandhi's perception of immanence, rather than transcendentalism, in the nation-making process, arguing: "The process of becoming a nation, and the struggle for its emancipation are simultaneous". This is a comment about cultural identity, and its role in the modern politics of anti-colonial struggle. Chandra takes this argument a step further, arguing: "Perhaps no nation would have been formed and Indians would have remained the inhabitants of a geographical entity, without the anti-colonial struggle, its ideological practices, and its reliance on the people ... nation was not a datum provided *a priori* to the national movement".⁴⁹

However, Chandra is not making the postmodern argument that all national identities are somehow imagined piece-meal constructions, easily deconstructed by discourse analysis. Chandra is analysing the reasons for why Indian national independence ushered in a vibrant and economically independent democracy, rather than one-party dictatorship, military terror and reinsertion

49 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 442-443.

into neo-colonial economic circuits. He finds that the advent of anti-colonial strategies correlated dialectically to the specificities of the colonial state structure. Practice produced a specific type of nation. Chandra's argument innovatively combines structure and agency, providing an explanation for the revolutionary gradualism of events like the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-32). A vastly powerful mass resistance was triggered through an apparently innocuous everyday object of common use, in the salt Satyagraha. Salt was commonly used by all religions, ethnic and linguistic groups, and social classes. In this instance over 90,000 people went to jail for civil disobedience and – in the multi-centred constellation of related social protest movements blossoming from it – boycott of British cloth resulted in imports falling by half. Although Muslim participation was less than in the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-21), it remained a significant force. There was mass participation by poor and illiterate people in city and countryside, and notable peasant participation.⁵⁰ The nation-making process occurred in modern India through mass mobilisation, and it was certainly not a matter of piecemeal discursive constructions.

Structure: Chandra identifies four interdependent structural features defining the colonial state, which generated the Indian nationalist conjuncture, in unifying power, a central contradiction, colonial structure as de-development, and semi-hegemonic power.

(1) *Unifying power:* “The same colonial power oppressed all classes and all sections of the people inhabiting the sub-continent, irrespective of their class, caste, region, religion or language. Thus, a common enemy and common oppression united all Indians”.⁵¹ From this unremarkable premise, Chandra draws a striking extrapolation about nationalism without essence:

“... we may hypothesise that if India had been conquered and ruled not by one colonial power but several ... perhaps no Indian nation

50 Chandra et.al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, 282-283.

51 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 218.

could have been formed. We have the example of Latin America where the Spanish settlers could not form a single nation ... despite sharing (apart from Brazil) common language, religion and culture and having thought themselves to be new Americans or American-Spaniards, because of having been ruled and administered as separate units by Spanish colonisers and having organised more or less separate struggles for independence".⁵²

This insight suggests that it is not shared language, ethnicity or religious belonging that makes a modern nation, *a priori*, but shared experience of intense struggle against a more powerfully organised foe through days, weeks, and years of common hardship and eventual victory. It contains in kernel the following truth: the emergence and empowerment of cross-class interests in a mass struggle against a centralised state places great demand on the creation of pluralist institutions in the independence aftermath. With struggle based on violent practices, such inclusion is a less likely outcome.

This explains Gandhi's comment during the Quit India speech about military dictatorship as a major risk of violent power seizure. A military dictatorship is more likely as the outcome of a coup d'état, and both are more likely where a national movement has been splintered and demobilised over a long duration. It is the combined experience of struggle that fosters a shared national belonging through rooting solidarity, whether in the French Revolution, the French Resistance, or the Indian national independence movement. But non-violent mass mobilisation provides the opportunity for enduring co-ordination between popular classes and radical leadership in a way that violent power seizure does not. The Raj proved unable to withstand an Indian population that became increasingly ungovernable through the mass struggles of the 1940s, which had intermittently exploded in cycles of activism since 1920. An empire of two centuries was thereby undone following two

52 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 382-383.

decades of mass struggle, and an ideological struggle the roots of which can be traced to at least the mid-19th century.

(2) *Central contradiction*: The Indian national movement, it follows, was the product of the central contradiction, opposing the unifying colonial power and the interests of the Indian people. Colonial societies produced common national interests dialectically as a new social reality. There is nothing intrinsic in such common interests, as in the primordial identity suggested in the fictional General Will of the French nation indivisibly opposed to the particular interests, estates, or castes of the declining feudal order and Papal jurisdiction. National interests are conjuncturally specific. The new reality of a common Indian national interest overlaid a secondary order of power - the centuries' deep Indian lifeworlds riven with class, caste, gender and other forms of social conflict produced by entrenched traditions of hierarchic domination. At this secondary level, the conflicting social interests were many and grave.

Common national interest was the result of the colonial conjuncture. It would necessarily not survive into post-independence as such. It would require the building of inclusive political and economic institutions to do so, against the deep cultural legacy of inequality and the social devastation left behind by colonial rule. Nevertheless, through the very experience of the independence struggle, the experience of common national interest would shape a new Indian national culture based on specific values and meanings. For example: "after 1920 abolition of untouchability [was] made a basic constituent of the programme [and] the cause of women was taken up actively. Highness and lowness in society was made a target of general attack. The multi-faceted diversity of the Indian people was fully recognised".⁵³ This national culture would inform the building of such post-independence institutions.

(3) *Colonial Structure as De-development*: The central contradiction could be resolved only through the overthrow

53 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 13.

of global colonial economic relations. Why, however, a central contradiction at all? It is not self-evident. We must glimpse a wider global vista: the Atlantic Slave Trade and the British Indian Empire present a comparable pattern. The Indian national movement from the 1880s introduced an unprecedented critique of colonialism. Its deep pro-poor orientation and emphasis on modern economic development was the fruit of Naoroji's pioneering "drain theory". The colonial structure was a distinctive sub-system - part of the global capitalist system, but exhibiting a distinctive non-capitalist dynamic.⁵⁴ Capitalism does not simply reproduce itself in identical form across the entire world. This myth of world capitalism as the identical proliferation of a single pattern has often been accepted dogmatically by sections of the Left.

In the colonial context, there is a distinctive colonial structure: it reverses the cumulative development achievements of a colonised country and impoverishes it, for the purpose of development advances in the home country. Until 1780, India and China produced vastly more cotton than Europe and North America, before European capitalists and states moved to the centre of the cotton industry. India was systematically gutted of its deeply entrenched traditions of economic development, which had been important on a global scale. China and India became subservient to the Europe-centred empire of cotton.⁵⁵ As Chandra notes: "there was not much of a difference between the initial conditions of India and those of the pre-industrial state of the developed countries in Europe and of Japan".⁵⁶

(4) *Semi-hegemonic power*: the colonial state was extractive and coercive, yet semi-hegemonic/semi-authoritarian. Unlike Hitler's Germany, Tsarist Russia, or even the French occupation of Algeria or Vietnam, the British Empire in India was an instance of legal

54 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 62.

55 Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage, 2014), 1-10.

56 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 277.

authoritarianism. It was established by and maintained in existence through violent force, while being also grounded in the creation of civil institutions and the rule of law, espousing a double ideology of benevolence and invincibility. The colonial state represented itself as having released India from centuries of anarchy, despotism and arbitrary justice in its self-justifying narrative. It acquired hegemony significantly because Britain had a democratic state at home, a transnational feature.⁵⁷ Its political element had the edge over its military element. The Indian freedom struggle was therefore a War of Position.

The Indian population was technically disarmed and militarily inferior.⁵⁸ The Gramscian “war of position” was a “far more complex political struggle”, in which “the political element should always prevail over the military”. It is “fundamentally of a military character, but mainly fought on the political plane”.⁵⁹ The strategy is grounded in everyday time: the Gandhian strategy was neither social change imagined in total time as a violent lightning assault upon the state, a “transcendental” revolution, nor within the limits of legal reformism. The strategy was built upon a long-term mass-based transformative project centring direct mass action in civil society - or “the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’”.⁶⁰ The struggle therefore concerned not merely power but plural meanings and values, occurring within the temporal space of everyday life. The Indian national movement achieved, over an extended period, the erosion of colonial hegemony, in a counter-hegemonic process. Hegemony had a concealing function, in masking the central contradiction:

“Colonialism in the colonies does not lead to the substitution of the pre-capitalist modes of production or social formation. Instead, it leads to a specific colonial sub-social formation of capitalism that is at least

57 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 25.

58 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 28.

59 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 25.

60 Gramsci, 12.

as much an anti-economic development, as much as an obstacle to the growth of capitalism, as the pre-capitalist social formation with the difference that because of the strength of the worldwide system of capitalism-imperialism it would require a prolonged and complex struggle to overthrow and de-structure it.”⁶¹

Agency: We thereby better understand the broad conjunctural background providing the context for Gandhi’s comments about “ways and means”. Gandhian pluralism was, on one level, a philosophical ethic. It was simultaneously an accurate strategic assessment of the colonial state.

Gandhi certainly recognised the need for complete Indian independence from British rule, voicing it through an ethic of reconciliation. When delivering an independence pledge in 1930, he declared his “ambition” as no less than “to convert the British people through non-violence”.⁶² Gandhi was no less radical in seeking full independence, even as he broke with Rousseau’s endorsement of political violence in nation-making: “in putting the guilty to death, we slay not so much the citizen as an enemy”.⁶³ He said: “Suspension of civil disobedience does not mean suspension of war. The latter can only end when India has a constitution of her own making”.⁶⁴ In the anti-colonial struggle, central value rested upon the capacity of anti-colonial leadership to know correctly, or to grasp the central contradiction: given the colonial structure, a multi-class mobilization (i.e., a national movement united by a common interest) was the only feasible strategy for gaining independence from Empire.

There is a counter-example in the intellectual failure of important sections of the Indian Left during the independence struggle to

61 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 380-381.

62 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* Volume 3, p. 17.

63 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, in *The European Philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche*. Ed. Monroe C. Beardsley, (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 343.

64 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, xv.

grasp the character of the Gandhian strategy and ideological framework, because of dogmatic conceptions of global capitalism as driven by a deterministic “inevitability”. A pre-fab template already explains how everything must happen. Chandra charges the Comintern-Baran-Frank model, for example, of espousing a transcendental theoretical optic at the expense of the immanent processes of concrete social experience: “The determinism inherent in the belief that in the present era independent capitalism cannot be built prevents any concrete study or examination of the actual course of developments and the concrete features of capitalism that may be being built”.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, he addresses the criticism to the “communist movement in India”, which, “for long – at least till the late 1950s and large segments of it even thereafter – believed that the inherent ‘essence’ of the colonial and the formerly colonial bourgeoisie was to seek or desire dependence on or collaboration with foreign capital”.⁶⁶ Lastly, citing their flawed reading of Marx, Chandra cites the Second International (1889-1916) as “taking a chauvinist imperialist stand on the colonial question or ignoring it altogether”.⁶⁷

Chandra’s epistemological premise is Marxism as a science: “Marxism as a scientific theory and method might have to be extended like those in other fields, of his contemporaries, Gauss, Maxwell, Darwin and Mendeleev”. Extension implies the permanently open horizons of the type Gandhi alluded to in rejecting closed definitions in favour of “ways and means”. Chandra writes: “the adoption of Marx’s theories did not mean a ‘blind repetition of all his conclusions (and even less, those of the official, party-line Marxists) at all times’”.⁶⁸ Extension implies institutionally-contained and informed dialogue, the core of the

65 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 390.

66 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 410.

67 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 384.

68 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 100.

modern scientific process from 20th century pioneers in the theory of science Gaston Bachelard to Thomas Kuhn.

Nation-Making: The Communicative Principle

Studying the Gandhian revolution permits the historian to assess the logic of anti-colonial mass mobilisation, while recognising the core of agency in the achievement of broad social communication. If we look with a pre-fab template that already explains everything that must happen, then there is no reason to communicate. For what purpose can it serve, if we already know everything? Dogmatic omniscience leads to a closed 'single way'. It results in agency for the elite, but disempowerment of the world of everyday people.

The consequences of economic failure on the broader French public in 1789, including famine, resulted in the violent intervention of the popular masses into a traditionally exclusive political process, an experience which radically expanded the category of the nation – in a country where different estates were subject to different laws - through linkages joining the *journées*, the *sans culottes*, and the Jacobin club to a common organizational purpose. However, as Bankimchandra recognized in the Indian context in 1870, the English language constituted a wall separating the new Indian elite from the many regional languages of the popular masses: “they are deaf to our eloquence”.⁶⁹ Communication is the radical challenge facing every nation-making process at the mass mobilisation stage, the success of which decides its ethical outcome in a distinctive circle of moral consideration.

Within the ambiguous realm of *habitus* and moral virtue texturing everyday life, we find the powerful link between intellectual elite and popular masses, providing the ground for eventual mass mobilization in the Indian national independence

69 Bankimchandra Chatterjee, “A Popular Literature for Young Bengal” (1870), in *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature*, ed. Amit Chaudhuri (London: Picador, 2001), 14.

movement under Gandhi. He broke with a pattern that had repeated the French revolutionary logic of direct and violent insurrection. The Hindustan Republican Army (1924) had worked to organise armed revolution, 1925 saw the Kakori Conspiracy Case, in 1929 there was the Assembly Bomb Case, and in the year 1931 (when Bhagat Singh was hung) two school girls shot dead the District Magistrate.⁷⁰ This second revolutionary wave, following the late 19th century precedent of revolutionary terrorism, again failed to mobilize the popular Indian masses. It raised the question of war, guns and insurrection as the optimal strategy for gaining independence. These terrorists became folk heroes, but this practice remained an individual phenomenon. Gandhi's pioneering break with the French revolutionary prototype was to shift open communication to the core of organized mass mobilisation, away from heroic and exemplary acts of violence.

This quality of communicative everydayness was most powerfully expressed in the Constructive Programme. The Constructive Programme of 1922 called for national unity between Hindus and Muslims, an end to untouchability, and sought to "foster local industries, improve sanitation, educate all children as well as adults, promote provincial languages as well as Hindi, and emancipate women".⁷¹ Upon this grassroots basis, Gandhi, by way of Constructive Programmes, relaunched the national movement from the ground up, employing transformed religious meanings - accessible to the popular masses but anchored in a secular and civil rights basis. The achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity at the national level was sought through a newly organised national network of Constructive Programmes, through which social reforms could be undertaken at plural, popular and consensual levels. The fundamental importance of Constructive Work was articulated

70 Chandra, et.al., 249-253.

71 Gandhi, "Constructive Programme: It's Meaning and Place" in *Hind Swaraj and other writings*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 180.

when Gandhi wrote: “civil disobedience in terms of independence without the co-operation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless”.⁷² This emphasis on modesty among leadership and ceaseless communication differs starkly from the mono-vocal “cult of genius” that gained ascendancy with the French revolutionary Terror, with Robespierre proclaiming the superior value of cleansing violence over institutional constructs: “a regenerator must see big, he must mow down everything in his path”.⁷³

Mass agency without communication is impossible. Gandhi was set apart by his practice from other 20th century figures – influenced by the French Revolutionary paradigm – who also set upon life paths of fighting oppressive political regimes in the name of radical democratic ends: the tendency to ‘conflict resolution’ rather than ‘destruction of the enemy’, a view to particular situations rather than the uniform political line, open dialogue rather than doctrinal dogma as a basis for social reconstruction, and an ethic of reconciliation rather than revenge. To quote John Dewey, there was no “call to create a world of ‘reality’ de novo”.⁷⁴ Because such a new beginning is merely a fiction of the elite imagination. In sum, Gandhi expressed a more modest but no less critical notion of reason. This is itself a major advance over the limiting dogmas of French revolutionary reason, while retaining its major advantages in terms of universal human emancipation.

Gandhi’s axiom, “the non-beginning of a thing is supreme wisdom”, suggests a conception of rationality as choosing intelligently among existing alternatives in a given situation to promote certain already existing democratic tendencies and actively oppose others of a socially oppressive nature.⁷⁵ For Gandhi’s quote suggests the

72 Gandhi, “Constructive Programme”, 180.

73 François Furet/Mona Ozouf, *Dictionnaire Critique de la Révolution Française. Idées* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 160.

74 Dewey, *Philosophy*, 355.

75 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 109.

nature of time: nothing in the world really has a beginning. As long as it exists, it is ceaselessly changing. Therefore, how can identity be bounded and closed to the outside? It follows that what we call cultural traditions are in ceaseless flux. They are constituted of multiple and diverse components. The point is not to reject such traditions in their totality, for such a totality is merely the fictional projection of a hostile outside perspective or the dogmatic claim from within the tradition of specific features over others. Gandhi is suggesting that every tradition that is alive presents those belonging to it with an existential choice, and the ethical person must choose those aspects of the tradition that serve the cause of human welfare – while rejecting those features of the tradition that have become oppressive, toxic and hateful, and therefore unethical and harmful. No ethical person, however, can undertake this selection process in a vacuum. It is a social and dialogic undertaking.

No total rupture with all past traditions, as the French Revolution professed to do, is possible. Its revolutionary leaders viewed their task in finding “a new absolute to replace the absolute of divine power”.⁷⁶ Moved by the “pathos of novelty”, by which nothing of comparable “grandeur and significance had ever happened”, they believed in a “new beginning” linked inextricably to violence as the means to creating a “new body politic”.⁷⁷ It was in this spirit of total novelty that Sieyes proclaimed the need to be “open in showing our hatred of internal enemies of the nation” as an expression of “patriotic feeling” and the “first, initial act of public justice”.⁷⁸ With the second Revolution in 1792, the premise of a legal framework for communicative conflict resolution was jettisoned in favour of an open ideology of war. Saint Just summed this up in a famous inside/out dichotomy, saying, “A republican government has virtue

76 Hannah Arendt. *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 39.

77 Arendt, 34-35.

78 Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes, *Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 41.

for its principle; if not terror. What do those want who want neither virtue nor terror?”⁷⁹ In the French revolutionary context, we see a homogeneity deriving from metaphysical unity, and this unity would be monovocal. The crucial turning point initiating the Second French Revolution occurred in 1793 when “parliamentary rhetoric and communication changed (...) as by now speakers and listeners were presumed to have identical knowledge and convictions”. We see the centring of a unifying political ontology with “consensus as (a) goal (being) superseded by a discourse in which consensus was the premise and its celebration the end”.⁸⁰

Gandhi said: “Everyone cannot be of the same mind, and none is perfect. People holding different views on the same question can all be right each from his own point of view. It is necessary for progress that people understand this”.⁸¹ It is a mode of non-violent conflict resolution and political practice based on three levels of persuasion: “through reason”, “through suffering” which dramatizes the issues at stake to draw the opponent back into discussion, and finally “non-violent coercion characterized by such tools as non-cooperation and civil disobedience”.⁸² Gandhi said: “mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long and based on supposed religious authority”.⁸³ The Gandhian concept was thus invested through the body: *dharma* is “concerned with practical life”.⁸⁴ One is confident enough in their belief to suffer publicly and even ultimately die for it, but can never have the certainty in it to kill another. Gandhi’s ‘non-violence’ partly emerges from this understanding.

79 Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 139.

80 Kennedy, 303.

81 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 499.

82 Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian philosophy of Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 11.

83 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 272

84 Gandhi, *CW* 32, 152.

Hegemonic struggle by theoretical definition therefore implies an open horizon, not a closed system based on a fixed formula. Its essence is communication. Organization and communication are inextricably co-dependent. Nehru, in 1953, reiterated this view: “To be able to understand a problem, we have to talk to one another and argue and discuss, for merely learning by rote cannot help us to understand the crux of the problem”.⁸⁵ The challenge that Gandhi brilliantly reckoned with was: how to make an abstract concept (i.e., the central contradiction) visible to the masses conceptually, who already encounter it intuitively in everyday life?⁸⁶ This prolonged everyday communication process is indispensable in realising the fundamental aim of the national movement in full independence.⁸⁷ The Indian national movement centred ideas of the autonomous moral person and civil society pluralism. It was in this open sense, and not some predefined human nature, that Gandhi called himself a “humanitarian first and to the end”.⁸⁸ This offered a deepened imagining of “citizenship”, a dialogic conception based on the removal of those rigid traditional political and social roles associated with the segregationist hierarchies of the Great Chain of Being in Europe, the fixed pyramidal arrangement of the traditional Ottoman order, or the *Nizam*, conceived in the likeness of a body and unequal in its constituent parts through an Islamic theological schema, or the Indian Caste system. Of course, it also targets the purely imaginary modern segregationist hierarchy in institutionalised racism, that has poisoned the world as the institutional legacy of the twin institutions of chattel slavery and colonialism.

85 Nehru, *SW* 23, 67.

86 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 8-9 /382-383.

87 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 97.

88 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 241.

The Meaning of Revolution and Development

Given the nature of the colonial structure, revolution and socialist development are inextricably interconnected as two adjuncts of a single process in post-colonial nation-making (i.e., they are circulatory). It follows: “Even after a prolonged anti-colonial struggle has overthrown empire politically, the task is only half done”.⁸⁹ This is why Nehru’s post-independence statesmanship is a crucial part of understanding the revolutionary significance of the Gandhian Indian independence movement. Nehru coped with post-independence India’s complexity through following the Gandhian legacy of a multi-centred nationalism without essence. He proclaimed it the “first time in the world’s history (that) a great political mass movement (was) wedded to (non-violent) ideals,” and contrasted this to “class conflict, hatred and violence.”⁹⁰ The Gandhi-Nehru experience, however, belonged equally to a wider global phenomenon in historical nation-making: the heritage of the modern democratic Enlightenment and the French Revolution, or the “history of equality”.

Chandra compares Nehru (1889-1964) and Gramsci (1891-1937) as contemporaries both facing the epistemic and ethical problems of the second circle of violence and progress, or the Stalinist tragedy in the Soviet Union as evidence that something had gone atrociously wrong in the path of the dominant entity shaping the 20th century radical Left:

“Nehru could not be a Gramsci. What he could, however, do was to see the inapplicability of the existing Marxism and the futility of Indian communist practice based on it ... with the passage of time, he gave up the effort to pose an alternative to the Gandhian strategy and followed, instead, in practice, pragmatically accepting the ‘logic of facts’ without theorising the Gandhian strategy”.⁹¹

89 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 380-381.

90 Nehru, *Letters to the Chief Ministers*. 4 (1947-64) (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 535.

91 Chandra, *Making of Modern India*, 120.

In 1928, before Nehru's embrace of Gandhian strategy, Gandhi replied to Nehru's charge of gradualism by saying: "I have made revolutions while others have only shouted revolutions".⁹² The Gandhi-Nehru experience of the 20th century set a unique precedent for pluralism against the background of dominant political traditions tending toward totality (the French Revolutionary principle of total assimilation with its intellectual afterlife in Comtean positivism). Its legacy is manifested not only famously in the martyrdom of Martin Luther King but also many lesser-known figures like Iranian musician and civil activist Neda Agha-Soltan in 2009. Her fellow demonstrators captured the alleged assassin, but released him unharmed while taking his ID card on the grounds that their movement based itself upon an ethic of non-violence.

Distinctive elements in Gandhi's worldview, we must note, preserved the French Revolutionary inheritance: (1) a new concept of legitimacy based on the provisional nature of political institutions, and rejecting the transcendental value linked to antiquity. A Young India reader claimed in 1925 that millions of Muslims who, seeing Gandhi as a guide, might be disillusioned by his condemnation of the legitimacy of stoning in the contemporary world. Gandhi replied: "I wish that they could say with me that even if it could be established that the practice of stoning to death could be proved (in accordance with holy scripture) they could not defend it as being repugnant to their sense of humanity".⁹³ (2) The recognition of immanent value in political action. A population has the right "to compel justice from" the ruler.⁹⁴ Gandhi emphasised the right "of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules".⁹⁵ He argued that "no state however despotic has the right to enact laws which are

92 Madan Mohan Verma, *Gandhi's Technique of Mass Mobilization* (Delhi: Partridge Publishing, 2016), 74.

93 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 415.

94 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* 1, 300.

95 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* 1, 297.

repugnant to the whole body of the people”.⁹⁶ (3) The legitimisation of conscience as a force of political judgment and action, or human autonomy in relation to tradition and history: “Man is the maker of his own destiny”.⁹⁷ (4) Finally, the French Revolutionary conviction that “political emancipation means the rise of mass consciousness”.⁹⁸ These are Gandhi’s words, but they echo the French Revolution. Certainly, the French Revolution was unprecedented in identifying the political awakening and conscious participation of the masses as the crucial key to human emancipation. Gandhi shared this conviction. His difference was over the issue of means, or an alternative perception of time as open and plural, everyday time, not a totalizing utopian horizon. The masses, for Gandhi, were not the means to a utopian transcendental realm, to be reached as a type of inside/out antithesis to the present world. The wellbeing of the masses in the present world was his concern, the immanent reality of everyday life.

Nehru as Fulfilling the Gandhian Revolutionary Promise

Nehru hailed the “first time in the world’s history (that) a great political mass movement (was) wedded to (non-violent) ideals,” and contrasted this to “class conflict, hatred and violence.”⁹⁹ He argued that India had “won our independence through a bloodless revolution in conditions of honour and dignity both to ourselves and to the erstwhile rulers of our country. We in India today are children of this revolution and have been conditioned by it”.¹⁰⁰ Nehru saw democratic roots requiring the autonomy of multiplicity – that is, the system requires an anti-system, to bolster public legitimacy and check actions and utterances. Nehru wrote: “it

96 Gandhi, *CW* 19, 207.

97 Gandhi, *CW* 26, 294.

98 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* 2, 227.

99 Nehru, *Ministers* 4, 535.

100 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works* 36 (Delhi: OUP, 1984-1991), 491.

would be a good thing for opposition parties with constructive policies to grow up in India. Without any opposition there is always a tendency towards complacency and mental and moral deterioration”.¹⁰¹ Nehru housed Muslim refugees during the 1947 Delhi riots. This explains his remark: “citizenship received more thought than any other article contained in the Constitution”.¹⁰² Nehru’s *Discovery of India* envisions a conflicting double-process: full political democracy and economic “development” within one nation-making process. The “development antinomy” opposes economic and political freedoms. The Soviet Union and Nasserite Egypt, reproducing the Western capitalist pattern, deemed co-existence impossible. Early capitalist “development” deprived majorities of political and economic freedom, occupation choice or governance participation. Nehru called the circles of violence and progress “the central problems of our time”: how to combine “democracy with socialism”, “individual freedom and initiative” with “centralized social control and planning of the economics of the people”.¹⁰³

Between 1950-64, in post-independence, Nehruvian public policy fostered Indian economic recovery and unprecedented growth following a half-century of stagnation under Empire, constructing foundations for India’s late 20th century economic acceleration.¹⁰⁴ Nehruvian “development” laid foundations for India’s enduring political independence and accelerating economic growth today, however short of Nehru’s socialist agenda. Nehru had a critical perception of development, being aware of its potential abuses to

101 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters for a Nation: From Jawaharlal Nehru to His Chief Ministers* (Delhi: Penguin, 2015), 106-7.

102 Jayal, 57.

103 Nehru, *Discovery*, 610.

104 Pulapre Balakrishnan, *Economic Growth in India. History and Prospect* (Delhi: OUP, 2010), 56.

humankind and the earth: “[With] the earth, as with our individual lives, there is far too much of burning the candle at both ends”.¹⁰⁵

Nehru belonged to a distinctive Indian socialist tradition. The Congress Socialist Party, established in Patna in 1934, radicalized Congressmen while linking the Gandhi-Nehru ideology to Marxism in the 1930s. Until 1946, Indian socialists had reiterated the Meerut programme of class struggle. At the Nasik Socialist party conference, following Gandhi’s 1948 assassination, leaders resolved to build socialism through non-violent “development”. Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-79), general secretary, explained the policy change: “the happenings of the past few months have made me reconsider the whole position. Humanity has been uprooted. There have been mass murders. Women have been raped. Children have been cut to pieces. Blood has flown freely”. Narayan envisioned mass self-education in Constructive work: “It is through intensive constructive activity amongst peasants and workers that we will be able to achieve a socialist society and build up democratic socialism.”¹⁰⁶ Four keys defined India’s democratic consolidation of civilian power in the Nehru period: the unique Congress party position, elections, the primacy of the Constitution, and minority rights.¹⁰⁷ These institutionally grounded the “citizenship achievement” and “public action”.

India’s “development” decades 1950-80 present a “circular and cumulative causation”. The early 1950s growth dynamic initiated future growth acceleration. The impact of the 1960s Green Revolution permanently raised the agricultural growth rate, especially in food production, through forward and backward linkages energizing inter-sectoral growth relations. The 1950s foundation, therefore, met exogenous intervention in the 1960s. Planned economic development fostered Indian economic growth

105 Nehru, *Discovery*, 74.

106 Francine R. Frankel, *India’s Political Economy, 1947-1977. The Gradual Revolution* (Delhi: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 63-65.

107 Varshney, 123.

and ensuing acceleration. Nehru died without witnessing the benefits to the Indian economy through inter-sectoral stimulation.¹⁰⁸

In conclusion: while military power could have seized post-colonial India, the existential rooting of the mass movement limited this possibility through its structuring force while the conjunctural element of sheer chance avoided this outcome. The role of ideological rooting during the national independence struggle was central, showing how the Congress leadership's coherent nation-making vision under Gandhi figured the sources of social power in post-independence to privilege civilian rule. We may therefore consider the Indian experience between 1920 and 1964 among the 20th century's great revolutions, comparable to the 1917 Russian and 1949 Chinese revolutions, or the Vietnamese revolution culminating in 1975. All involved the mass mobilization of people, the visionary leadership, the struggle to create a modern and democratic society. Each was unique. Yet all of these revolutions, except the Indian one, followed and developed the distinctive Marxist stream flowing from the French revolutionary tradition and therefore evolved into some form of dictatorial state. The Indian experience adopted and transformed core elements of French revolutionary conventions in modern nation making, to produce a democratic state based on the rule of law that was coterminous with rudimentary economic development.

The Citizenship Achievement: Communication and Learning

The ideas in *Discovery* corresponded to events on the ground in the early 1940s, the "right of the Indian people to decide for themselves".¹⁰⁹ This citizenship and public action "social imaginary" differed from that of Nasserite organicism, imposing "citizenship" from above (i.e., the Liberation Rally). The plural and inclusive

108 Balakrishnan, 54-55.

109 Akbar, 348.

circle of moral consideration, grounded in the communicative principle, opened Nehruvian India to the multi-centred chaos of post-independence as innumerable learning processes. The Nehruvian gamble envisioned the communicative principle as transcending the circles of violence and progress. The aim was to prevent as much suffering as possible without sacrificing something else of comparable moral importance, that is, striking some kind of balance between multiple conflicting freedoms.

There is a correlation with the innovative educational ideas of John Dewey. Dewey believed modern citizenship incompatible with top-down socialist society building, affirming plural autonomies. In 1899, Dewey's "New Education" was "part and parcel of a whole social evolution", concerning the "industrial application of science" in "great inventions that have utilized the forces of nature". These had produced the "growth of a worldwide market as the object of production", with "rapid means of communication and distribution". This required "a necessary change in the attitude of school" involving elimination of "cultured' people/worker" dichotomies, to "conceive educational aims less exclusively". Inclusive "citizenship" required educational transformation of subjects into citizens: "If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through a complete transformation" where "the types of occupations reflecting the life of the larger society permeate the spirit of art, history and science".¹¹⁰ Education must engender autonomous "lifeworlds", while teaching mutual egalitarian respect among all individuals. We find comparable views in the writings of Ambedkar, for whom Dewey was a direct inspiration. Ambedkar's revolution in ideas reemphasised the original Marxist correlation between the creative labour power to make and destroy worlds, with the fundamental importance of individual choice in shaping life's road:

110 Dewey, *Philosophy*, 456-467.

“As a form of division of labour the Caste system suffers from another serious defect. The division of labour brought about by the Caste System is not a division based on choice. Individual sentiment, individual preference has no place in it. It is based on the dogma of predestination. Considerations of social efficiency would compel us to recognize that the greatest evil in the industrial system is not so much poverty and the suffering that it involves as the fact that so many persons have callings which make no appeal to those who are engaged in them.”¹¹¹

We find a similar emphasis on the need for modern education in reflections from Tagore as when he said: “in my view the imposing tower of misery which today rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education”.¹¹² The modern market enslaves populations unless public action – as in Polanyi’s counter-movement - pressures governments to make it serve human welfare through the introduction of self-protective and empowering systems of legislation. Public action requires an educational system teaching the democratic value of the communicative principle, that is, in circulatory fashion, the educational system must be independent and foster an anti-system. Basic education in the ability to read and write gives freedom to be informed, to communicate with others, while being illiterate in a modern society is something like being in a prison. Economic opportunities and employment prospects depend on the skills provided by education. Illiteracy contributes to insecurity, leaving populations vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation. Social empowerment includes the ability to read newspapers and books, making democracy more effective because it fosters self-creating networks built on ever larger circuits of communication. Educational development in places like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh has been a major factor in the increased demand for health care and other human rights, showing the circulatory correlation between basic education, a culture of political and

111 Mukherjee. “B. R. Ambedkar”, 345-370.

112 Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen. *An Uncertain Glory. India and its Contradictions* (London: Penguin, 2014), 107.

social rights, and an activist civil society.¹¹³ Nehru recognized the necessity of new educational institutions related to the Ethic of Reconciliation:

“The pace of modern life, the succession of crisis after crisis, comes in the way of a dispassionate search for truth. ... Each one sees the truth in his own way and is often unable to appreciate another’s viewpoint. Out of this comes conflict. Out of this interaction also a fuller and more integrated truth emerges. For we have to realize that truth is many-sided and is not the monopoly of any group or nation”.¹¹⁴

By calling “enforced unity a sham and dangerous affair”, Nehru rejected the rule of a one-party state linked to military power as the instrument of post-colonial nation-making. He rejected any ideology making a claim to perfection: “Perfection is beyond us for it means the end, and we are always journeying, trying to approach something that is forever receding”. Multiple temporal horizons require a means-based consequentialist ethic involving “a calm and dispassionate consideration of consequences”, for “attempting to solve one problem in the wrong way may well create new problems”.¹¹⁵ The realization of a “fuller and more integrated truth”, i.e., a ceaselessly open dialogic public space, requires institutional embeddedness through the rule of law and the independent self-organisation of civil society. Nehru staked the Ethic of Reconciliation experiment in consensual development on the communicative principle, not fully recognizing how communication can be demagogically mobilized to malicious ends through fear, ignorance and prejudice. Desperation and revenge can spread like an infection through ordinary people, making them do wicked deeds. This danger becomes paramount when the social state has fallen short in its aim to defang the predatory logic of capitalism.

113 Drèze/Sen, *Uncertain Glory*, 107-108.

114 Nehru, *Discovery*, 624-625, 586.

115 Nehru, *Discovery*, 626, 587.

Quit India: Between Mono-vocal Belonging and Secular Citizenship

Nehru suffered prison nightmares, describing a “moon” that “looked quite green”, “fed up, I suppose, with the goings on in this world”. Beyond the walls, bombs tore apart Bombay, Surat, and Karachi, as famine ravaged Bengal. Nehru wrote that “someday the world will know”.¹¹⁶ Hunger was a politics of violence then as now. Nehru’s prison reflections examined two “social imaginaries”. The 1942 Quit India Campaign protested forced participation in Imperial war, calling for full independence. The Raj arrested all Congress leaders within one week.¹¹⁷ Mass strikes, violent disturbances, and demonstrations paralysed Bombay to Delhi and Calcutta, with 1,028 killed and 3, 125 injured.¹¹⁸ Demolished railway lines, telephone lines, and bridges littered the countryside. Suppressed by the army after four months, Quit India demonstrated British loss of long-term control over India.¹¹⁹

Organicist mobilizations spread fictional landscapes. The “Pakistan idea” gained greater popularity among Muslim-minority provinces than in the “Pakistan Provinces”, attesting to rampant politics of fear.¹²⁰ Having organized an effective mass political opposition to the Muslim League in pre-Partition days, Allah Bakhsh, Sind Premier during the 1942 Quit India movement, was murdered in 1943, by professional killers hired by the Muslim League, opening Muslim League entry into Sind.¹²¹ From prison, Nehru saw violence having “lowered the whole tone of public life, embittered it, increased mutual dislikes and hatreds”.¹²² The

116 Akbar, 355.

117 Vivek Chibber. *Locked in Place. State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 92-94.

118 Townson, 688.

119 Chandra et.al., 464-465.

120 Wolpert, 249.

121 Shamsul-Islam, chapters 5 -7.

122 Akbar, 355.

1945 Winter elections followed the Shimla conference. Jinnah was “hailed as the champion of Islam”. The “uninformed Muslim [was] told that the question he is called on to answer at the polls is – Are you a true believer or an infidel and a traitor?” Gandhi was described as “the greatest enemy of Islam in India”.¹²³ Indian secularism crystalized on the recognized link between organized political violence and organicist ideology, the explicit opponent of the Ethic of Reconciliation.

Organicism concerned citizenship, i.e., power distribution. Nehru saw in political Islam and Hindutva the drive to “differentiate and create two classes of citizens ... the latter having some kind of inferior status and opportunities”.¹²⁴ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, once Congress President (1940-45), was a practicing Muslim, while the Pakistan founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, hardly practiced, belatedly embracing Islamism. A modern information war was neither “for nor against” some tensionless Islamic essence. Multiple social re-imaginings of religious traditions were at stake.¹²⁵ Nehru recognized that ultimate questions concern the place of ethics in each person’s daily life: “God, we may deny, but what hope is there for us if we deny man and thus reduce everything to futility? Yet it was difficult to have faith in anything or to believe that the triumph of righteousness is inevitable”.¹²⁶ There is no shortage of opportunities for ethical commitment to worthwhile causes.

Integrating Labour: Capitalists, Parties and Unions in the National Transition

Organized integration of Indian labouring classes into the freedom struggle through parties and unions was fundamental to remaking

123 Wolpert, 249, 207.

124 Nehru, *Ministers* 3, 439.

125 Amartya Sen, “Secularism and its Discontents”, in *Secularism and its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: OUP, 2009), 467-8.

126 Nehru, *Discovery*, 520.

the inside/outside modernist “social imaginary”. By World War I’s end, Congress recognized the potential power of mobilizing India’s working class. The 1919 Amritsar Congress declared:

“This Congress urges its provincial committees and other affiliated associations to promote Labour Unions throughout the country with the view of improving social, economic and political conditions of the labouring classes and securing for them a fair standard of living and proper place in the body politic of India”.¹²⁷

The Congress Socialist Party formed in 1934. Congress Ministries in most provinces, from 1937, marked the peasant movement’s apex in village units as *Karshaka Sanghams*.¹²⁸ Militant cadres of the Civil Disobedience Movement emerged from India’s peasant movement. The timing of labour integration into India’s national struggle underpinned Gandhian organizational success, adding force to nationalist demands. Organized labour demonstrates how human consciousness, through solidarity networks, mediates structural conditions and social outcomes. It follows that India’s freedom struggle was no uniform flow, but multiple conflicting freedoms. It was clearly understood by the leadership, which is why the Ethic of Reconciliation was the central ideological figure. Indian industrialists reacted to Quit India with the ambiguity of capitalism’s encounters with historical accidents. A United Provinces governor ascribed a “Vichy mentality” to Indian business. If “Japan and the Axis” won, they would “save their property” by any means, while, if things “improve”, they were “inclined to drop this [collaborationist] attitude”.¹²⁹ Uninterrupted business profit was foremost. Capitalism parasitically collaborates with any system – Apartheid, caste, slavery, democracy - provided a reliably expanding profit persists, as multiple accidents become

127 P.R.N. Sinha/ Indu Bala Sinha/ Seema Priyadarshini Shekhar. *Industrial Relations, Trade Unions and Labour Legislation* (New Delhi: Pearson, 2013), 76.

128 Chandra et.al., 345.

129 Chibber, *Locked*, 94.

opportunities. Individual capitalists are a different question to accumulation logic, where, again, human consciousness mediates outcomes.

Indian capitalists feared national labour integration, while depending upon it. Languishing in jails, sometimes providing financial help, capitalists varied between commitment, neutrality and collaboration. In mid-19th century India a largely independent capital base existed, untethered by pro-imperialist landed interests either economically or politically. By the mid-1920s, Indian capitalists saw long-term class interest consistent with anti-imperialism. At independence, indigenous enterprise had cornered 72% of the market.¹³⁰ The Bihar governor noted that “business supremacy was, in their minds, more important than political freedom; and the latter was only a means to an end”.¹³¹

Conflicting interests forged post-independence institutions. Fears over “the inevitability of a change in the direction of a socialist economy”, based on “strong popular support”, underlay the Bombay Plan.¹³² The Bombay Plan was the template for the future Indian social state, envisioning rapid economic growth and equitable distribution, partial nationalization, the public sector, land reform, and worker welfare schemes. Anti-socialist, the Indian capitalists were not all-powerful, and evolved a “many-sided strategy” to contain the Indian Left.¹³³ This landscape of multiple conflicting freedoms confirms the sociological logic of the “double movement”. Indian nationalism, neither capitalist created nor led, was not crucially dependent upon its support. The national transition is not reducible to the capitalist transition, nor to a cultural modernity implanted from outside.

130 Chandra et.al., 375-385.

131 Chibber, *Locked*, 93.

132 Chibber, *Locked*, 96-97.

133 Chandra et.al., 384.

Capitalist Transition

We underline that point because, methodologically, the capitalist class is often imbued with a type of omniscience it does not realistically have. In Vivek Chibber's pioneering *Locked in Place*, for example, the empirical evidence is strong, but the explanatory schema suffers from the voluntarism an all-powerful capitalist class as primary cause. Chibber engages "institutional-capabilities" failures in "State Capacity as Dilemma", explaining transnational institutional pressures driving post-colonial nation-making processes:

"Starting at least from the 1930s, there emerged in many LDCs [late developing countries] a powerful consensus around the desirability of state-led rapid industrialization. Since the collapse of world markets during the Great Depression, powerful political impulses emerged in developing countries for governments to come to the aid of "their" local capitalists. Capitalist pressure was an important component of the impulse toward state-coordinated industrial development. Complementing this was the fact that political elites, too, found it in their interest to argue for such policies."¹³⁴

Capitalism and state planning, antinomies in Liberal dogma, were entangled in the postcolonial conjuncture. A transnational collectivist shift defined the interwar crisis, exemplified in Bolshevism, but part of a wider revolution in property relations ratifying their social and imaginary, not natural or ontological, character. West European nations, their deeply entrenched 19th century capitalist hierarchies now shattered by World War I, shifted to governmental controls over economic life. Chibber sees Indian "development" defined by "network" alliances: "Rapid industrialization [becomes] a 'shared project' between the state and capital, for neither can implement the project on their own". He locates the fundamental "puzzle": "if there was a consensus around this project, then how did it transpire that so many attempts at state

134 Chibber, *Locked*, 85.

building ended as failures?” Chibber rightly rejects the neo-liberal myth that regeneration through a “free” and “spontaneous” market was stifled by an overbearing Indian state:

“The most common answer to this puzzle places emphasis on conflicts within the political elite. State-building was successful in those cases where political elites were able to organize themselves for the job ... Despite the alliance of the Indian National Congress with domestic capital, the Congress, because of internal squabbles, and dogmatic commitment to socialist economy, built a state that only served to stifle local entrepreneurial initiative.”¹³⁵

The free market unrestrained does not build a free and prosperous society, but a democratically self-undermining plutocracy. Chibber advances an explanation which recognises how alliances in institution-building often have common departure points while also having radically opposed end goals, and a power struggle over those different ends will define the institutional trajectory:

“Re-examine the whole question of there being a ‘shared project’ between political elites and local industrialists. Scholars have tended to elide the difference between an agreement around the fact of state intervention and an agreement around its modalities. While there was a consensus around the former, we ought not to presume that it extended to the latter.”¹³⁶

Chibber implies multiple alternate development trajectories, asking why “so many political elites have been unable to install appropriate institutions for disciplinary industrial policy”. He traces this “capabilities-failure” to “conflicts between the state and industrialists”, where “commitment to subsidization brings with it, for state managers, an impulse to impose discipline”.¹³⁷ Indeed, India’s economic planning in the post-independence period as a state-led development strategy – with the exception of “essential services” such as railways, power, and water – was “firmly in the

135 Chibber, *Locked*, 85.

136 Chibber, *Locked*, 85.

137 Chibber, *Locked*, 23-25.

private sector, and while the government did intervene in many ways, there was no sweeping nationalisation of industries, let alone major land reforms”.¹³⁸ Chibber’s Manichean causality, however, falls short in explaining India’s complex post-independence failure to achieve “economic citizenship”:

“It is the argument of this book that the critical factor that blocked the building of a successful developmental state in India was the widespread and organized resistance of the business class ... The business class was opposed to the kind of disciplinary planning necessary for a developmental state ...”.¹³⁹

Chibber’s comparison is with South Korea. Highlighting the capital disciplining role of the Korean state, in contrast to India, Chibber minimises severe labour repression accompanying it. If the Korean state was capital-disciplining, it was also brutally labour-repressive.¹⁴⁰ By contrast, India’s state policies and labour legislation were labour repressive neither overtly nor covertly. Balakrishnan has written:

“The state in India was not up to the task of disciplining either private capital or organized labour, including the employees of the public sector. On the other hand, this task had been performed, with some panache, by the repressive regimes to the east of India.”¹⁴¹

State-level “institutional-capabilities” failure explains why neither capital nor labour were disciplined in India, contradicting an omnipotent capitalist “locking in” India’s masses. Radical Left political parties have flourished, launching major grassroots “development” trajectories. Communist-led trade unions have proliferated, fostering dynamic and progressive social politics through the electoral system. From the hunger, ill-health,

138 Drèze/Sen, *Uncertain Glory*, 25.

139 Chibber, *Locked*, 85.

140 Frederic Deyo. *Beneath the Miracle: Labor Subordination in the New Asian Industrialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

141 Balakrishnan, xxxi.

homelessness, illiteracy, and class, caste, and gender oppression that characterized India in post-independence,

Kerala's accomplishments have shown that "the well-being of the people can be improved, and social, political, and cultural conditions transformed, even at low levels of income, when there is appropriate public action".¹⁴² The "economic citizenship" crisis as bourgeois dominance of state policy is, at best, only a partial explanation. It has other causes.

Individual and Institutional Capabilities: Public Action and Mass Education

Today Kerala has India's lowest birth and death rates, the literacy rate among persons 7 years old and above is over 90 %, with advances in abolishing untouchability, and women achieving health and education gains. Kerala has the best public food distribution system among Indian states, with the widest newspaper circulation. Comparable living standard improvements have occurred through public action in West Bengal. The communist party, by fostering state-level primary education, recognized a crucial protection in the struggle against capitalism and caste oppression, i.e., "institutional-capabilities". The Indian state did not suppress these pathbreaking communist movements. These movements became the state through winning power in elections. The CPI-M failure to spread beyond two bastion-states, West Bengal and Kerala, however, has reflected leadership ideological and organizational shortcomings. Trade union members in many factories would have, understandably, switched loyalties to unions affiliated with the parties victorious in elections.

Balakrishnan explains post-Independence state failure to provide "economic citizenship" conjuncturally, cataloguing policy errors. He doubts Chibber's "Lock-In" thesis:

¹⁴² Jean Drèze/Amartya Sen. *Indian Development. Selected Regional Perspectives* (Delhi: OUP, 1997), 207.

“Errors in commission, the spawning of an increasingly unregulated economic bureaucracy, and of omission, gross neglect of schooling. But there have been four decades at least in which to correct these. To hold that this is due to a ‘lock-in’ effect of the Nehruvian strategy and that nothing could have been done to alter the situation is only to confirm that we have not understood the lessons of even our recent past.”¹⁴³

Nehruvian strategy was not merely the puppet of the Indian capitalist class. The capitalist class, too weak to independently industrialize, had inadequate strength for full state control.¹⁴⁴ The dismal fate of agrarian and industrial working classes over seven decades reflects: (1) India’s world’s second-highest GDP growth rates over several decades occurred through (2) the services-sector, a skill rather than labour-intensive basis, exemplified in Bangalore and Hyderabad’s IT sector. Indian labour remains overwhelmingly stuck in the “informal” sector, with minimal farm to factory labour. While conjunctural shortcomings partially explain failed “economic citizenship”, India’s regional variability for effective public action betrays a wider scale “institutional-capabilities” failure in the state transition, through neglected mass primary education.

As Dreze and Sen have noted, “when people are illiterate, their ability to understand, invoke and use their legal rights can be very limited”. As Salma Sobhan saw in the Bangladeshi context, “illiteracy was one of the major barriers to the realisation of women’s rights”. As a general circulatory principle, “lack of schooling can directly lead to insecurities by distancing the deprived from the ways and means of resisting the violation of established legal rights”. Ultimately, within the “history of equality”, we note that “education can make a big contribution to reducing inequalities related to the divisions of class and caste”.¹⁴⁵

Interventions by 1950s Indian political leaders centring

143 Balakrishnan, 92-93.

144 Baldev Raj Nayar. *Globalization and Nationalism* (New Delhi: Sage, 2001), 73.

145 Drèze/Sen, *Uncertain Glory*, 109.

primary education were rare. B.V. Krishnamurti of the Bombay School, however, in 1955, differentiated mass education as a quantitative economic policy-issue in national resource allocation, and the fundamental qualitative “lifeworld” substratum enabling full growth of Indian democracy in the “economic citizenship” aspect. Following publication of the Planning Commission’s Recommendation for the Second Five Year Plan, Krishnamurti declared “sums allotted for education in the Mahalanobis Plan absurdly low”. A “lopsided” policy gave “inadequate importance to education and social services”. He urged reallocation to primary education from outlay on heavy industries:

“A concerted effort to educate the mass of the population, especially in the rural areas, would undoubtedly have far-reaching benefits of a cumulative expansionist character. This would greatly lighten the task of the government in bringing about rapid economic development.”¹⁴⁶

Krishnamurti voiced the “circulatory thesis”, linking mass education (ideological power), democratic self-emancipation (political power), and national economic growth (economic power). Markets are fundamental to sustained growth, governments indispensable to outcomes. Investment in human “capabilities” underpins both, as labour productivity correlates with per capita expenditures on education.¹⁴⁶ Krishnamurti recognized mass education not as one item upon a list, but the existential substratum of democratic development foregrounding individual-collective “capabilities”. He concluded: “being brought up in the traditions of mid-Victorian finance”, the Indian government applied “the calculus of the private grocery merchant to a matter like education”.¹⁴⁷

Appropriate initial resources allocated to primary education would have revolutionized the Indian social landscape. Constitutional power made Indian education a ‘State Subject’.

¹⁴⁶ Balakrishnan 86-87, 90-91.

¹⁴⁷ Balakrishnan, 88-89.

Nehru era policymaking committed a fundamental judgment error, privileging higher and technical education over mass literacy and primary schooling. Industrialization required training the peasantry, a task the private sector would never undertake. The significance for women's emancipation is staggering. Institutional rudiments for a successful socialist revolution were absent – an astonishing miscalculation given the intellectual quality of the leadership. Ambedkar had argued that “education is the greatest material benefit for which [the oppressed castes] can fight”, privileging education in the 1950 Constitution as the road to revolutionizing the “social imaginary”.¹⁴⁸ The road was not followed. Ambedkar left the Nehruvian government in 1951, arguing: “of what use is having gained liberty, if we cannot use it to institutionally reform inherited cultural systems of inequality?”¹⁴⁹ It was the role of public services to bring about an educational transformation that did not happen. Dreze and Sen write:

“... the first Five Year Plan, initiated in 1951 – even though sympathetic to the need for university education – argued against regular schooling at the elementary level, favouring instead a so-called ‘basic education’ system, built on the hugely romantic but rather eccentric idea that children should learn through self-financing handicraft.”¹⁵⁰

This had been Gandhi's pedagogic idea, which he explained in the following words: “handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils”. Gandhi held that teaching reading and writing before handicrafts “hampers their intellectual growth”. Dreze and Sen underline how Indian planners were therefore at the opposite pole from planners in all communist countries. In the Soviet Union, Vietnam, or China, universal standard school education was highly valued as

148 Vijay Prashad. “India's BR Ambedkar would have abhorred the politics of Narendra Modi”, *The Guardian* April 14 2015

149 Jaffrelot, 180.

150 Drèze/Sen, *Uncertain Glory*, 24.

a fundamental socialist commitment as stated explicitly in the Communist Manifesto. It was therefore not “socialist planning” that resulted in the neglect of school education in Indian planning. Dreze and Sen write: “It was indeed a home-grown folly, to a great extent reflecting an upper-class – and upper-caste – bias against the education of the masses”.¹⁵¹

The Indian Socialist Tradition: Inherited Networks Between Security and Oppression

State-directed development was structured by Empire’s surviving shell. Prior to Partition, Nehru was “quite sure” in 1934 that “no new order can be built in India so long as the spirit of the Indian Civil Service pervades our administration and our public services”. It was “essential”, he argued, that “the ICS and similar services must disappear completely”.¹⁵² Partition forced embrace of “law and order” ends. Mass migration sought beyond the insecurities of minority status, religious persecution and women’s vulnerability to rape and abduction. Testimonies reveal hope for better law and order conditions. Others cite land, livelihood, government schools, water and electricity in seeking a better life. Some escape from hard labour conditions, i.e., breaking stones, to opportunities elsewhere. Hopes for life security and quality drove millions of citizenship applications. Citizenship as network provided an exit from statelessness and violent chaos.¹⁵³ Populations transcend their political leaders. Politics can never define people and life’s infinite expressions. That is the meaning of the “lifeworlds” beyond the mere category of civil society. In good governance, individual “capabilities” are circulatory with institutional “capabilities”, fostering greater collective “freedoms and functionings”. Organized groups may prey

151 Drèze/Sen, *Uncertain Glory*, 25.

152 David C. Potter. *India’s Political Administrators 1919-1983* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 27.

153 Jayal, 94.

upon vulnerability: poverty, illiteracy and wartime exigencies, in the form of child trafficking and the worst crimes imaginable. Education and development help to remove populations from this vulnerability, preventing the electoral mechanism becoming a “divide/rule” machine.

The “lifeworlds” were existentially and ethically invested in the “subject” to “citizen” transition. The question is whether the state fulfilled its ethical role in the “development” process by providing collective “capabilities”. Indian socialism was transformed by mass mobilized non-violence. The Congress Socialist Party, established in Patna in 1934, radicalized Congressmen while linking the Gandhi-Nehru ideology to Marxism in the 1930s. Until 1946, Indian socialists had reiterated the Meerut programme of class struggle. At the Nasik Socialist party conference, following Gandhi’s 1948 assassination, leaders resolved to build socialism through non-violent development. Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-79), general secretary, explained the policy change: “the happenings of the past few months have made me reconsider the whole position. Humanity has been uprooted. There have been mass murders. Women have been raped. Children have been cut to pieces. Blood has flown freely”. Narayan envisioned mass self-education in Constructive work:

“It is through intensive constructive activity amongst peasants and workers that we will be able to achieve a socialist society and build up democratic socialism ... Government should not be the only instrument of social good. We have to train the workers in the fields and factories that they will become strong enough to look after themselves ... It should be our aim to educate the mass mind that socialism will become the basis of their life.”¹⁵⁴

The ideological aim was to mobilise bottom-up social change through a practical process of public education emphasising self-reliance, rejecting the vanguard dictatorship and “inevitability”

154 Frankel, 63-65.

dogma that plagued the second circle of violence and progress. Indian socialism shifted its “social imaginary” to empowerment of everyday “lifeworlds”. This ideological ambition clashed with the power constructs of brutal “lifeworld” hierarchies. Hereditary caste groups formed social organizational units in hundreds of thousands of villages, in customary norms of non-symmetrical rights and obligations, i.e., ontologically enshrined inequality. Control of agricultural land was pyramidal: arable land, caste, wealth and power converged. The pollution barrier constructed occupational divisions assuring a steady labour supply for most polluting tasks. Millions of Indians faced exclusive institutions rooted in religious dogmas.

The Steel Frame of the Indian Civil Service had provided an alternative status system, in administration as legal equality and merit-based recruitment, its coveted places in English medium schools giving Indians an alternative prestige, dynamizing the social system. These two competing status systems retained major traction because early economic planning saw significant growth rate in the primary and secondary sectors, agriculture and manufacturing, but little in terms of social infrastructure and tertiary industries.

Nehru articulated the experimental “communication” ethic in terms of a bottom-up national unity:

“... the very first practical question is: What are the essential common bonds which must bind and cement various parts of India if she is to progress and remain free, and which are equally necessary even for the autonomy and cultural growth of those parts ... all this must necessarily be based on a spirit of willing cooperation, on the absence of a feeling of compulsion”.¹⁵⁵

In the mid-1950s, rapid industrialization occurred. Early sustained growth (1950-51, 2 to 3 times higher than under British administration) saw life expectancy at birth rise from 32 years in

155 Nehru, *Discovery*, 593-94.

the 1940s to 37 years in the 1950s, and to 43 in the 1960s.¹⁵⁶ Agricultural “development” strategy was driven by millions of small farmers in labour intensive production programmes and community action projects. Great agricultural production increases, crucial for large scale industrial expansion, were imagined through an intergenerational time perspective. Forging mass consensus over distribution norms and radical reconstruction would trigger mass bottom-up pressure, forcing institutional transformation without the “doomsday” of “class war”.¹⁵⁷ Empowering village grassroots institutions would mobilize mass participation, thereby launching rural improvement plans. The village was the primary unit of modern economic-political action.

Its institutional embeddedness was in multiple parties become mechanisms for disestablishing old political elites. Widening mass participation, and representing new constituencies, it is exemplified in the CPI-M in Kerala and Bengal.¹⁵⁸ Mobilization of the poor within the demand politics framework depended upon their organizational connection to the political processes of policy choice and implementation, though party competition. The voter sovereignty driving Indian demand politics implied the poor would benefit more than the rich. In reality, mass political participation amidst entrenched social hierarchy favoured the better organized and affluent. The Nehruvian conviction that all castes and classes could agree upon general living improvement betrayed excessive faith in “communication” and voluntary elite self-reform. The Ethic of Reconciliation thereby shows its weaknesses as an ideological source of power without the appropriate political and economic structures to sustain its egalitarian purpose.

156 Balakrishnan, 60-61.

157 Frankel, 101.

158 Rudolph/Rudolph, 217-219.

Mass Empowerment in Primitive Accumulation: A Historical Balance Shift in Political Power

Nehru's non-violent organizational mode was for "building up citizen forces", "village organization", and a "long training that the people had received".¹⁵⁹ Mobilizing the "lifeworlds" was "a new method of struggle and political warfare".¹⁶⁰ Congress Hindu Brahmin predominance was offset by adult suffrage extended to intermediate castes, combined with the economic effects of Zamindari abolition.¹⁶¹ It was the "biggest experiment in democracy in human history" – universal adult suffrage with a largely illiterate population (1951 16.6 % literate).¹⁶² It was also the "most culturally diverse country in the world".¹⁶³ Nehru declared India "too large a country with too many legitimate diversities to permit any so-called 'strong man' to trample over the people and their ideas".¹⁶⁴ Pluralist politics defined the language policy, linguistic state reorganization, tribal policy, the Constitutional and federal structure, and national elections. These constituted a multi-sided interaction of popular movements, civil society, and ruling/opposition parties within a national framework comprising rural and urban areas.

Universal adult suffrage regardless of caste redistributed political power away from landed upper castes, empowering the traditionally low-status peasant majority. Urban-based civil society institutions, exceeding the reach of rural slums, were impacted by mass electoral participation. Nehru said, in 1955: "We took a bold step in India by adopting a democratic Constitution and adult suffrage ... It

159 Nehru, *Discovery*, 516/542.

160 Jawaharlal Nehru. *Independence and after. Speeches September 1946-May 1949* (Delhi: Publications Division, 1949), 28, 81.

161 Paul Brass. *The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 247-248.

162 Ramachandra Guha, 147 / Bipan Chandra, et.al. *India Since Independence*, 184.

163 Brass, 65.

164 Chandra, et.al. *India Since Independence*, 226.

demonstrated our faith in our own people".¹⁶⁵ At least 40 % of eligible women voted in the first national elections, reflecting expanding participation patterns inherited from the independence struggle.¹⁶⁶ Increasing income and surpluses from agriculture of millions of small farmers, the process aimed to trigger a re-evaluation of justice norms through collective practices of equality and cooperation, persuading local elites to yield advantages faced with majoritarian demand for greater rural resource allocation. Expanding production could accommodate this power rebalance, avoiding open peasant-landed class warfare. Nehru declared in 1953 India's development strategy "no longer American but Gandhian".¹⁶⁷

In 1947, Nehru announced an "alternative to capitalism and totalitarianism", in the first official statement of a "third way".¹⁶⁸ Seeking an alternative to the Soviet experiment, Indian planners pursued two principles of economic power: (1) decentralization of all economic activity to the extent compatible with overall central planning of the economy; (2) preservation of the village as the primary unit of production. Following Gandhi's "non-beginning", they built upon foundations in old group values and surviving institutions, to provide material advance for the rural masses within traditional village settings. The Nehru regime rejected collective farming, favouring village-based cooperatives, with minimal "coercion".¹⁶⁹ Mass mobilizations would arise from the hopes of illiterate tenant farmers and landless labourers.

Construction of the Bhakra-Nangal multipurpose dams started in 1948 and was completed by the end of 1963. Holding excess waters during the monsoon and providing a regulated release during the year, the dams prevent damage from the monsoon floods while providing irrigation to 10 million acres of fields in Punjab, Haryana,

165 Nehru, *SW* 28, 4.

166 Nehru, *SW* 28, 134.

167 Frankel, 105-106.

168 Frankel, 16-17.

169 Frankel, 70.

and Rajasthan, while generating and distributing electrical power among the states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Chandigarh and the capital city of Delhi.

India's "development" decades 1950-80 present a "circular and cumulative causation". The early 1950s growth dynamic initiated future growth acceleration. The impact of the 1960s Green Revolution permanently raised the agricultural growth rate, especially in food production, through forward and backward linkages energizing inter-sectoral growth relations. The 1950s foundation, therefore, met exogenous intervention in the 1960s. Planned economic development fostered Indian economic growth and ensuing acceleration. Nehru died without witnessing the benefits to the Indian economy through inter-sectoral stimulation.¹⁷⁰ These inter-temporal gain distributions illuminate the unique challenges of economic backwardness and democratic polity faced by the Nehruvian regime, and, hence, its unique meaning and ethics as a "developmental" experience.

The Second Circle of Violence and Progress: Breaking with the Soviet "Development" Model of Ideological and Economic Power in Everydayness

The "lifeworld" contribution of the Indian freedom struggle to the second circle of violence and progress replaced "perfectibility" with rationality in ethics. Motilal Nehru (1861-1931), a committed lawyer, opposed Gandhi's appeal to the lawlessness of civil disobedience in the name of a "higher call". By breaking the law, one becomes a criminal.¹⁷¹ Is calling dissenters "criminals" legitimate under unjust regimes? The younger Nehru, like Antigone, embraced the transcendental right of individuals to revolt against state-law systems undeserving of moral recognition. Political orders, like

170 Balakrishnan, 54-55.

171 Akbar, 116-117

established property relations, are a social construction demanding recognition as “common sense”. In the 1930s, Nehru went:

“... increasingly towards the communist side ... While the rest of the world was in the grip of depression and going backward in some ways, in the Soviet country a great new world was being built up before our eyes. Russia, following the great Lenin, looked into the future and thought only of what was to be, while other countries lay numbed under the dead hand of the past ... History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, howsoever unconscious, behind it.”¹⁷²

Nehru felt the “world [was] marching rapidly towards the desired consummation”. This betrays a secularized religious theodicy. Nehru might have embraced Stalinism but for Gandhi, linking violence, inevitability and utopia: “Violence was common in both places, but the violence of the capitalist order seemed inherent in it; whilst the violence in Russia, bad though it was, aimed at a new order based on peace and cooperation”.¹⁷³ The Soviet Union’s aura of mass faith requires explanation. The Nehru experiment ultimately sought structures to overcome the anonymity of enormous and highly mobile societies in dialogic and participatory conditions that avoid creating outcasts. This was part of the “scientific temper”, in “a way of life, a process of thinking, a method of acting and associating with our fellow men”. Nehru called it the “adventurous and yet critical temper of science”, a “refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions”.¹⁷⁴ It did not expect to end all conflict between human beings. Reason provides the capacity to recognize that each of us is one being among others, i.e., the equality principle.

The astonishing material success of the revolutionary new Soviet

172 Jawaharlal Nehru. *An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), 378-9.

173 Nehru, *Autobiography*, 377.

174 Nehru, *Discovery*, 570.

state explains the impassioned practical recognition it inspired as a Left “hegemonic” orientation. Electrifying Soviet expansion of the mid-1950s influenced Nehruvian policy. Abrupt 1991 Soviet collapse exposed the “development” model as unsustainable. In the 1950s, however, “development” ambitions of newly independent nations reasonably aspired to Soviet achievements. Nehru knew of the gulags and ethnic genocide. India would avoid oppression through democratic practice, even if it meant lower growth rate. Gandhi saw “no such thing as perfect rest or repose in this visible universe of ours.”¹⁷⁵ If we “slavishly copy the past,” we “cease to grow.” Gandhi sought “not the definition of an undefinable term like Swaraj”, but “the ways and means.”¹⁷⁶ Dewey had similarly argued “that, morally speaking, growth is a higher value and ideal than is sheer attainment.”¹⁷⁷ Growth is a different temporal outlook to the perfectibility in final ends. The future remains unwritten and ultimately unpredictable.

Everyday growth also defined Nehruvian socialism: “We have definitely accepted the democratic process. ... it promotes the growth of human beings and of society ... we want the creative and adventurous spirit of man to grow.” Nehru was committed to the slower *pace* constrained by a democratic legal framework: “It is not enough for us merely to produce the material goods of the world (and) to have high standards of living ... at the expense of the spirit of man.” This was integral to the “scientific temper” as “self-reliance” and a “capacity and creative ability”.¹⁷⁸ Nehru affirmed “capabilities”, learning freedom through self-government, seeing the technological conditions underpinning this “development” possibility. Nehruvian temporal horizons, in a 1947 Constituent Assembly speech, emphasised unpredictable consequences in technological revolutions:

175 Tendulkar. *Mahatma* 2, 225.

176 Tendulkar. *Mahatma* 2, 225, 240.

177 Dewey, *CF*, 18.

178 Nehru, *Discovery*, 571.

“One does not know ... what will happen in India two years hence or three years hence ... progress of technology and science is so enormous and so rapid that within a fairly short space of time ... the whole conception of modern industry will have changed completely ... New sources of power will be discovered and will upset the methods of production which exist today ... Whether we call ourselves socialists, communists, or capitalists, or by any other name, we are singularly unaware of the big changes taking place”.¹⁷⁹

Systemic justice is not restricted to the courts. Democracy is in the streets, emphasising human creative power. Nehru wrote: “Democracy is supposed to nurture [the] creative spirit but if it cannot bring about a release from poverty of large masses of human beings, then that creative spirit can only function in a few”. Hence, “political democracy is not enough. It must develop into economic democracy also”. However, economic growth was no end in itself: “Mere greater production without social justice is not only wrong in itself but also is unstable and without a strong foundation”.¹⁸⁰ Forced collectivization to raise the agricultural growth rate, or suspending democracy to quell dissent, were inconceivable. Worthwhile economic progress required public consent. Nehruism embedded the Autonomy of Science thesis on a mass scale, confronting the “antinomy of development”. Nehru wrote in 1963:

“Planning has of course been done in other countries; but not through democratic processes. Other countries which are democratic have not accepted planning. But the combination of these two concepts is rather unique.”¹⁸¹

The Ethic of Reconciliation embraced consequentialist ethics. The “Mahalanobis model” linked independence and popular wellbeing in industrialization, “imagining a mechanism whereby growth accelerates in a planned economy”, “the purpose of public investment was to raise the productivity of capital”, and “the growth

179 Chandra, et. al. *Independence and After*, 169.

180 Nehru, *Letters for a Nation*, 134, 162.

181 Balakrishnan, 42, 54-55.

rate would accelerate over time”.¹⁸² It envisioned releasing India “permanently” from the foreign-exchange constraint.

Hybridization of Soviet experience with the Ethic of Reconciliation produced incoherencies in contradictory “social imaginaries”. The Mahalanobis Model sought to replicate Soviet rapid industrialization without coercive institutions. The role of demand within a non-coercive “development” scenario was problematic.¹⁸³ In the Soviet ‘command economy’, planners decreed an investment pattern enforced by commissars. These conditions were absent in democratic India. The private sector invested only when confident of growing profits. In the command economy, surplus was constantly re-invested regardless of market signals, producing constant growth constrained only by declining investible surplus. These resulted from non-economic sources in mass political disaffection. Balakrishnan thus explains the fall of the Soviet economy after five decades of rapid growth. Qualitative trust networks, beyond state power, are central. Human action mediates ideological and organizational factors in the “circulatory thesis”, and this was the major insight that Nehru seems to have derived from his experience of participating in the Indian freedom struggle. He described the “scientific temper” in these terms: “Science deals with the domain of positive knowledge but the temper which it should produce goes beyond that domain. The ultimate purposes of man may be to gain knowledge, to realize truth, to appreciate goodness and beauty. The scientific method of objective inquiry is not applicable to all of these”.¹⁸⁴

Behind “names” like “Partition” and “development” were of course millions of uncounted “lifeworlds”. Unseen, soon-forgotten lives, wove a tapestry. A 260-rupee Rayleigh bicycle was an object to esteem and value, electricity had yet to arrive in Rajgangpur, in the recently formed Orissa province. It was life in a country

182 Balakrishnan, 44-45.

183 Balakrishnan, 46-47.

184 Nehru, *Discovery*, 571.

that had not, and still has not, allowed its people to grow to their fullest potential, from the middle classes to the massive underclasses. Refugee families, originally from East Pakistan (the post-1971 Bangladesh), were composed of individuals who passed away long before their time, leaving children never ceasing to regret parents never known well.

Conclusion

The wide grey river of European industrial intensification linked to the gutting of many historically deep civilisations by Empire threatened organized political power and ecosystems everywhere. It produced an inverse and parasitic relation to the victims it de-industrialized, with sugar traps for a subservient local elite. Empire, and perhaps the British Empire above all, also did much to globalize and introduce a transnational world of flows. This is manifest upon looking beyond the narrow intentions of empire builders, to the multiple collective and self-protective responses provoked among different classes, populations and “lifeworlds”. Transnational flows included commodities, merchants, as well as soldiers. Empire emphasised coercive military and economic practices. Indian soldiers of the British imperial army helped suppress the Egyptian Urabi Revolution in 1882, and Mahdist revolts in the Sudan in 1885-6, and 1896. Ideological power was pervasive, in flows of religious preachers and secular ideas: liberalism, nationalism, science and socialism.

Multi-centred connections joined Egyptian and Indian nationalists throughout the first half of the 20th century. No one-directional monolithic “modernity” flowed from the West to the colonies, as in the impact-response template of understanding the history of colonialism. The ideas of nation, democracy, socialism, citizen, capitalism, and the state were extensively reconstructed dialectically within multi-centred transnational spaces, in struggle

against a polymorphous divide-rule campaign. These ideas were not implantations from one culture to another, indeed, these very ideas served to overthrow the colonial power order at the global level. In this context, the “scientific temper” was essentially a political idea about the national transition from an anti-colonial mass movement to a multi-party nation-state, based on secular and pluralist principles, once the colonial state had been overthrown. We know that today, in India, the democratic and pluralist principles underpinning the “scientific temper” may be threatened by annihilation as a new transnational politics of autocratic populism takes hold in its specific Indian form.

We cannot understand the non-event of a military power seizure at independence in India without examining “lifeworld” roots in the prolonged anti-colonial freedom struggle, which impacted post-independence institution-building. By most accounts, the Indian military decided not to seize state power after independence because of faith in the civilian leadership. A second explanation: their training code forbade it. In neighbouring Pakistan, where the military underwent the same training in non-political professionalism, a crisis in civilian leadership instigated a military coup.¹ This civilian crisis also significantly explains the military outcome in Nasserite Egypt. Egyptian parliamentary order fell not from military strength, but from an “institutional-capabilities” crisis of civilian politics, in important measure the work of Empire and its disinformation campaign. However, a similar civilian leadership crisis was absent in India, despite Empire’s efforts to sow hatred and division between populations to better control the resources of the country. Abundant reasons for a military coup existed in India. Civilian-military relationship boundaries were tragically tested after independence faced with Partition genocide. “Hegemonic” alternatives between the heroic saviour (military power) and systemic power separation (civilian power) hinged

1 Apurda Kunda. *Militarism in India. The Army and Civil Society in Consensus* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 12.

upon “institutional-capabilities”, not “cultural authenticity” or “ontology”. This book has therefore followed a path dependency analysis, while examining how circulatory relationships emerge at many points but mostly between the colonial state and the national movement.

An international relations optic has been crucial to understanding why events took the path that they did. The Zionist military-imperialist thrust, its colonial “social imaginary” underpinning the 1948 establishment of the Israeli state, was pivotal in Egyptian state-democratic transitions. Israel constitutes its own circle of violence and progress. A robust democracy and strong educational system, ecological success in making the desert bloom through water and land management, yet, Israeli state hands sunk perennially in violent repression. The Arab-Israeli conflict significantly explains the “social imaginary” driving Nasserite militarism. Military power has an inside/out logic, excluding civilians. The grey area - that of ambiguity, uncertainty and dialogue – of everyday civilian life, embedded within political and economic power matrixes, is lacking. This grey area was the lynchpin of the Indian Ethic of Reconciliation, in the dialogic principle of persuasion over force. This communicative principle was at the core of the “scientific temper”, whether articulated by Tagore, Ambedkar, or Nehru. But Taha Hussein had a similar ideal of communication, a unique expression of the transnational “scientific temper” discourse, which he went to prison for once Nasser came to power and proclaimed a one-party state.

At a general level of observation, we need to move capitalism firmly back to the centre of analysis in the social sciences. In this study, we have frequently considered civil society as an aspect of Karl Polanyi’s “double movement”. But excessive focus on the activity of civil society as worthwhile in itself leads to what we have called the multi-axial vision of modern society. We find this tendency expressed at its best in Michael Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge* (1958) and Dewey’s *Common Faith* (1934). In every case of civil society that

we have observed here, collective activism responded to the problems produced within a given conjuncture by the deeper structure of the logic of capitalism. It is critical to understand that the logic of capitalism is not a uniform intervention in every temporal and spatial context. In the colonial context, Bipan Chandra provided the most vivid portrait – empire does not reproduce capitalism in the colony, it de-industrialises the colony to extract its accumulated wealth and transfer this to the mother country. It produces what Fanon vividly described as a “colonial society” in the *Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Despite many conjunctural specificities, colonial societies have the same structure in being the zones of economic annihilation for world capitalism and therefore face the same anticipations, problems, and projections. It is not a “discursive implantation”, but a pragmatic reality facing newly independent post-colonial societies, whether it is in Egypt and India. This is where Nasser and Nehru shared a great deal in common, despite having – upon examination – radically opposed visions for their societies that mattered a great deal in terms of paving a future nation-making path. These visions were not of individual men so much as the deeper social movements that shaped those men.

We have seen that there is a spectrum of regime types to meet this pragmatic horizon, but in a world dominated by the logic of predatory capitalism, there is no realistic option of simply withdrawing from the cash nexus, abstaining from the state, and retreating into local communities. Why do these institutions behave differently in post-colonial societies? At the structural level, we must look to the logic of capitalism. The effects of capitalism are not identical everywhere. By definition, colonial societies have been de-industrialised. This is the difference at the structural level. We don't need to fixate on a fictional cultural implantation which has usurped authentic being. The structural level was the same in India and Egypt, but with differing duration and impacting society in different ways. The Mohammad Ali period constituted its own military rooting of the nation-making path. The main

conjunctural difference concerned the status of military power in the nation-making process.

The main lesson to be drawn for the social sciences is that we cannot simply analyse the logic of institutions constructed by empire to understand the post-independence trajectory. We must give equal importance to the structure and logic of the national movement that sought, in the self-protective logic of the “double movement”, to force empire out of the territory in the struggle for independence. There is a varying balance of forces in the constellation of the sources of social power. There is also the element of sheer chance, that the dialectic, as merely a social scientific methodology, can never completely expunge from the assessment of possible outcomes. Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi died by accidents of history: Patel of a heart attack in Bombay in 1950, Bose in a 1945 plane crash in Japanese occupied Formosa. Gandhi was assassinated in Delhi in 1948. These historical contingencies gave Nehru a considerably free hand. How well did he use it? If nationalism is not a unitary “discourse”, ubiquitously reproducing the logic of “modernity”? With no prior ontological whole, imaginative components conjuncturally fuse into everyday temporal horizons.

“Development” was no Western “ontology”, but the conjunctural task of (1) re-structuring economies to establish winners, and losers, faced with (2) post-colonial devastation leaving grinding poverty necessitating radical transformation, against (3) the faltering but persisting transnational arrangement of elite luxury in the global capitalist north, built on suffering in the global south, and ultimately sustained by the power of military intervention much as Egypt experienced in the 1956 Suez crisis. This explains the common cause in the Non-Alignment Movement as a new socialist cosmopolitanism. The core issue is “institutional-capabilities”, not “cultural authenticity”, requiring a sociological explanation. For Fanon, the “national culture” was the direct creation of the mass struggle for independence, that is, the national revolution to

overthrow colonial rule and expel the invader. It is this that forges a modern national culture, a sense of belonging together among diverse populations, and breaks down many traditional barriers in the process. It is not the intrinsic otherness of non-Western culture that makes it impenetrable to capitalism.

The High Aswan Dam was a monumental showpiece. Anthony Eden, seeking British control and fearing Soviet influence, incited John Foster Dulles, in 1955, to offer \$400 million in U.S., British and World Bank loans and grants. International environmental experts quickly approved, emphasizing flood control, irrigation, and hydroelectric power. The disruption of the siltation cycle, disease vectors in the future reservoir, and varied other environmental hazards, remained unspoken. For a decade, Nasser's inner circle remained insulated from scientific warnings, threatening erosion of the Mediterranean coastline.² Silence produced ecological destruction. India learned that democratic institution-building produces severely conflicting networks. The Nasser regime avoided this in the Green Desert dream, beginning with the 1954 Tahrir Province desert reclamation experiment.³ Near the Rosetta Branch of the Nile, scientific exploitation involved "pioneers". Modernist villages were called Village Number 6 or Worker's Village, or Palestine, Freedom and Victory. Manufacturing complexes in chemicals, iron ore, aluminium, cement, and steel were joined with worker housing blocks, and grafted onto edge cities.⁴ "Development" of agricultural intensification within the inhabited Nile valley yielded to the conquest of the great emptiness outside. The monumental

2 Corinna Unger, John Robert McNeil eds. *Environmental Histories of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 50-60.

3 Waterbury, 64.

4 David Sims. *Egypt's Desert Dreams – Development or Disaster* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2015), 20-30.

dream of physical engineering and hydro-technology stretched out into the illimitable rolling desert.⁵

Nature no more favours humans than ants. To destroy Nature is to destroy oneself. Nature remakes itself without you. A human choice encompasses existing life on this planet. The universe, however, was not waiting for humans to appear. We care about our families and communities. Meaning and value therefore exists. Ethical meaning indeed encompasses a cosmopolitan horizon. Is the meaning local and temporary to the Milky Way? Very likely it is. Happily, the universe means something to us. Against the illogical vanity of believing our personal and public meanings endure eternally, Ambedkar proposed his moral thesis of “emptiness” to the world. This was a religious statement for our times, if enough time remains to learn from the tragic crimes and mistakes that saturate the human past. Since the 1970s, income inequality has quickly increased in rich countries. Yet inequality decreased during the 20th century, following 19th century labour struggles, world wars and decolonization. “Inevitability” is a falsehood. The sociology of “development” is filled with meaningful differences linked not to mythical human omnipotence, but everyday human responsibilities. This is the real meaning of the “scientific temper”, beyond its limited 20th century frame.

5 M.W. Daly, ed. *The Cambridge History of Egypt. Volume 2: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 337.

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