

NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY
NAGARBHAVI, BANGALORE - 560242



Au. No.
12691

READING MATERIAL

SOCIOLOGY I

I YEAR I TRIMESTER (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2013)
B.A., LL.B (HONS.) DEGREE PROGRAMME

Course Teacher: Prof. G. Shivaramakrishnan

NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU

I Year I Trimester B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) Degree Programme

SOCIOLOGY I – COURSE OUTLINE

Introduction:

The aim of the course is to provide the student with a fair and comprehensive introduction to the field of Sociology, its concepts, methods and theories. The subject of Sociology has changed greatly in the last twenty years. The main reason for the flux of the subject has been the shift into a new age when West, East and Modernity itself have become somewhat dated concepts. Society under global conditions requires us to rethink its basics. Martin Albrow's little book on the Basics is a must read for students. The Indian adaptation of Tony Bilton et al's very popular book on Introductory Sociology can be read with profit. Apart from these text books, the readings that are listed should enable the student to get a flavor of the subject.

The second half of the course is intended to introduce the student to Indian Sociology. There is a good selection of readings on Indian Sociology from its colonial origins to contemporary concerns.

Lecture would continue to be the dominant mode of instruction and students are expected to come prepared to the class having gone through the relevant readings. Attempt will be made to supplement lectures by documentaries and special talks.

Grading Criteria:

Attendance	:	5 Marks
Mid Term Exam	:	30 Marks
End Term Exam	:	30 Marks
Project	:	25 Marks
Viva-Voce	:	10 Marks

Total		100 Marks
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Course Outline:

Part A: Essentials of Sociology

1. Emergence of Sociology from Enlightenment: its nature, scope; relationship with other Social Sciences.
2. The nature of human Society – culture, sex and gender; money and capital; institutions and collectivities; Countries and Natures; the Globe.
3. Some basic concepts; Status and role; Norms and Sanctions Structure and function; conflict and change, Differences and inequality.
4. Social Institutions – Family; Religion; Economy and Polity;
5. Some theoretical issues: Positivism; Functionalism; Conflict theories; Post Modernity.

Part B: Indian Sociology

6. Development of Sociology in India – its colonial origins; Orientalism and Orientalist constructions of India.
7. Sociological studies of Contemporary Indian Society: Caste, Village and City.

Essential Readings:

1. Martin Albrow: Sociology: The Basics Foundations Books – 2003.
2. Tony Bilton et al: Introductory Sociology Macmillan. (Indian Adaptation) N. Jayaram.
Macmillan India – 1987.

Sl. No.	Reading	Source	Author
1	Invitation to Sociology	<u>Invitation to Sociology</u> Penguin 1963 PP 5-10	Peter Berger
2	Sociology: A Dis-invitation	Society, Transaction Publishers 1992 PP 39-42	Peter Berger
3	Social Research in an Ethical Context	Who Should know what? Penguin 1979 PP 13-24	J.A. Barnes
4	The Problem of Functionalism	Key Problems in Sociological Theory RKP 1961 PP 60-76	John Rex
5	Conflict and the Analysis of Class	Key Problems in Sociological Theory RKP 1961	John Rex

Sl. No.	Reading	Source	Author
		PP 136-154	
6	Power / Knowledge	The New Social Theory Reader Ibid PP 69-75	Michel Foucault
7	The Post Modern Condition	The New Social Theory Reader Ibid PP 166-175	Jean – Francois Lyotard
<u>Part B</u>			
8	Euro centrism and its Avatars: The dilemmas of Social Science	Sociological Bulletin 46 (1), March 1997 PP 22-39	Immanuel Wallerstein
9	India Must Rediscover itself	REadiscovering India Sidh Mussoorie 2003 PP 3-13	Dharampal
10	Dumont's Theory of Caste	The Interpretation of Caste ONP 1999, PP 21-37	Declan Quigley
11	The Modernity of Caste	Castes of Mind Permanent Black 2001 PP 3-18	Nicholas Dirks
12	Caste Inequalities in India today	Contemporary India Viking 2003 PP 98-124	Satish Deshpande
13	Indian Village: ' Village Studies' and beyond	Mimeograph (undated)	Manish K Thakur
14	The cohesive role of Sanskritization	Collected Essays Oup 2002	MN Srinivas
15	The Agrarian Structure and their transformations	Hand book of Indian Sociology (ed) Veena Das Oup 2004 PP 365-387	Surinder Jodhka
16	The Indian City	Hand Book of Indian Sociology Ibid PP 142-153	Narayani Gupta
17	Science	The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as power (ed) Wolfgang Sachs Zed books 1992 PP 219-232	Claude Alvares

(G Shivaramakrishnan)
Course Teacher

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Excerpt From:

Chapter I, "Sociology as an Individual Pastime" from

"Invitation to Sociology"

by Peter Berger

Published in 1963

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Reading 1

Reading 1.

READING - I

Invitation to Sociology

Peter Berger → ~~coming from the past~~

We would say then that the sociologist (that is, the one we would really like to invite to our game) is a person intensively, endlessly, shamelessly interested in the doings of men. His natural habitat is all the human gathering places of the world, wherever men* come together. The sociologist may be interested in many other things. But his consuming interest remains in the world of men, their institutions, their history, their passions. And since he is interested in men, nothing that men do can be altogether tedious for him. He will naturally be interested in the events that engage men's ultimate beliefs, their moments of tragedy and grandeur and ecstasy. But he will also be fascinated by the commonplace, the everyday. He will know reverence, but this reverence will not prevent him from wanting to see and to understand. He may sometimes feel revulsion or contempt. But this also will not deter him from wanting to have his questions answered. The sociologist, in his quest for understanding, moves through the world of men without respect for the usual lines of demarcation. Nobility and degradation, power and obscurity, intelligence and folly—these are equally interesting to him, however unequal they may be in his personal values or tastes. Thus his questions may lead him to all possible levels of society, the best and the least known places, the most respected and the most despised. And, if he is a good sociologist, he will find himself in all these places because his own questions have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers.

It would be possible to say the same things in a lower key. We could say that the sociologist, but for the grace of his academic title, is the man who must listen to gossip despite himself, who is tempted to look through keyholes, to read other people's mail, to open closed cabinets. Before some otherwise unoccupied psychologist sets out now to construct an aptitude test for sociologists on the basis of sublimated voyeurism, let us quickly say that we are speaking merely by way of analogy. Perhaps some little boys consumed with curiosity to watch their maiden aunts in the bathroom later become inveterate sociologists. This is quite uninteresting.

*[To be understood as people or persons.]

What interests us is the curiosity that grips any sociologist in front of a closed door behind which there are human voices. If he is a good sociologist, he will want to open that door, to understand these voices. Behind each closed door he will anticipate some new facet of human life not yet perceived and understood.

The sociologist will occupy himself with matters that others regard as too sacred or as too distasteful for dispassionate investigation. He will find rewarding the company of priests or of prostitutes, depending not on his personal preferences but on the questions he happens to be asking at the moment. He will also concern himself with matters that others may find much too boring. He will be interested in the human interaction that goes with warfare or with great intellectual discoveries, but also in the relations between people employed in a restaurant or between a group of little girls playing with their dolls. His main focus of attention is not the ultimate significance of what men do, but the action in itself, as another example of the infinite richness of human conduct. So much for the image of our playmate.

In these journeys through the world of men the sociologist will inevitably encounter other professional Peeping Toms. Sometimes these will resent his presence, feeling that he is poaching on their preserves. In some places the sociologist will meet up with the economist, in others with the political scientist, in yet others with the psychologist or the ethnologist. Yet chances are that the questions that have brought him to these same places are different from the ones that propelled his fellow trespassers. The sociologist's questions always remain essentially the same: "What are people doing with each other here?" "What are their relationships to each other?" "How are these relationships organized in institutions?" "What are the collective ideas that move men and institutions?" In trying to answer these questions in specific instances, the sociologist will, of course, have to deal with economic or political matters, but he will do so in a way rather different from that of the economist or the political scientist. The scene that he contemplates is the same human scene that these other scientists concern themselves with. But the sociologist's angle of vision is different. When this is understood, it becomes clear that it makes little sense to try to stake out a special enclave within which the sociologist will carry on business in his own right. Like Wesley the sociologist will have to confess that his parish is the world. But unlike some latter-day Wesleyans he will gladly share this parish with others. There is, however, one traveler

whose path the sociologist will cross more often than anyone else's on his journeys. This is the historian. Indeed, as soon as the sociologist turns from the present to the past, his preoccupations are very hard indeed to distinguish from those of the historian . . . the sociological journey will be much impoverished unless it is punctuated frequently by conversation with that other particular traveler.

Any intellectual activity derives excitement from the moment it becomes a trail of discovery. In some fields of learning this is the discovery of worlds previously unthought and unthinkable. This is the excitement of the astronomer or of the nuclear physicist on the antipodal boundaries of the realities that man is capable of conceiving. But it can also be the excitement of bacteriology or geology. In a different way it can be the excitement of the linguist discovering new realms of human expression or of the anthropologist exploring human customs in faraway countries. In such discovery, when undertaken with passion, a widening of awareness, sometimes a veritable transformation of consciousness, occurs. The universe turns out to be much more wonder-full than one had ever dreamed. The excitement of sociology is usually of a different sort. Sometimes, it is true, the sociologist penetrates into worlds that had previously been quite unknown to him—for instance, the world of crime, or the world of some bizarre religious sect, or the world fashioned by the exclusive concerns of some group such as medical specialists or military leaders or advertising executives. However, much of the time the sociologist moves in sectors of experience that are familiar to him and to most people in his society. He investigates communities, institutions and activities that one can read about every day in the newspapers. Yet there is another excitement of discovery beckoning in his investigations. It is not the excitement of coming upon the totally unfamiliar, but rather the excitement of finding the familiar becoming transformed in its meaning. The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives. This also constitutes a transformation of consciousness. Moreover, this transformation is more relevant existentially than that of many other intellectual disciplines, because it is more difficult to segregate in some special compartment of the mind. The astronomer does not live in the remote galaxies, and the nuclear physicist can, outside his laboratory, eat and laugh and marry and vote without thinking about the insides of the atom. The geologist looks at rocks only at appropriate times, and the linguist speaks

English with his wife. The sociologist lives in society, on the job and off it. His own life, inevitably, is part of his subject matter. Men being what they are, sociologists too manage to segregate their professional insights from their everyday affairs. But it is a rather difficult feat to perform in good faith.

The sociologist moves in the common world of men, close to what most of them would call real. The categories he employs in his analyses are only refinements of the categories by which other men live—power, class, status, race, ethnicity. As a result, there is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology.

Let us take a specific example. Imagine a sociology class in a Southern college where almost all the students are white Southerners. Imagine a lecture on the subject of the racial system of the South. The lecturer is talking here of matters that have been familiar to his students from the time of their infancy. Indeed, it may be that they are much more familiar with the minutiae of this system than he is. They are quite bored as a result. It seems to them that he is only using more pretentious words to describe what they already know. Thus he may use the term "caste," one commonly used now by American sociologists to describe the Southern racial system. But in explaining the term he shifts to traditional Hindu society, to make it clearer. He then goes on to analyze the magical beliefs inherent in caste tabus, the social dynamics of *commensalism* and *cohabitation*, the economic interests concealed within the system, the way in which religious beliefs relate to the tabus, the effects of the caste system upon the industrial development of the society and vice versa—all in India. But suddenly India is not very far away at all. The lecture then goes back to its Southern theme. The familiar now seems not quite so familiar any more. Questions are raised that are new, perhaps raised angrily, but raised all the same. And at least some of the students have begun to understand that there are functions involved in this business of race that they have not read about in the newspapers (at least not those in their hometowns) and that their parents have not told them—partly, at least, because neither the newspapers nor the parents knew about them.

It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem. This too is a deceptively simple statement. It ceases to be simple after a while. Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole.

Anthropologists use the term "culture shock" to describe the impact of a totally new culture upon a newcomer. In an extreme instance such shock will be experienced by the Western explorer who is told, half way through dinner, that he is eating the nice old lady he had been chatting with the previous day—a shock with predictable physiological and not moral consequences. Most explorers no longer encounter cannibalism in their travels today. However, the first encounters with polygamy or with puberty rites or even with the way some nations drive their automobiles can be quite a shock to an American visitor. With the shock may go not only disapproval or disgust but a sense of excitement that things can really be that different from what they are at home. To some extent, at least, this is the excitement of any first travel abroad. The experience of sociological discovery could be described as "culture shock" minus geographical displacement. In other words, the sociologist travels at home—with shocking results. He is unlikely to find that he is eating a nice old lady for dinner. But the discovery, for instance, that his own church has considerable money invested in the missile industry or that a few blocks from his home there are people who engage in cultic orgies may not be drastically different in emotional impact. Yet we would not want to imply that sociological discoveries are always or even usually outrageous to moral sentiment. Not at all. What they have in common with exploration in distant lands, however, is the sudden illumination of new and unsuspected facets of human existence in society. This is the excitement and . . . the humanistic justification of sociology.

People who like to avoid shocking discoveries, who prefer to believe that society is just what they were taught in Sunday School, who like the safety of the rules and the maxims of what Alfred Schuetz has called the "world-taken-for-granted," should stay away from sociology. People who feel no temptation before closed doors, who have no curiosity about human beings, who are content to admire scenery without wondering about the people who live in those houses on the other side of that river, should probably also stay away from sociology. They will find it unpleasant or, at any rate, unrewarding. People who are interested in

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human beings only if they can change, convert or reform them should also be warned, for they will find sociology much less useful than they hoped. And people whose interest is mainly in their own conceptual constructions will do just as well to turn to the study of little white mice. Sociology will be satisfying, in the long run, only to those who can think of nothing more entrancing than to watch men and to understand things human.

It may now be clear that we have, albeit deliberately, understated the case in the title of this chapter. To be sure, sociology is an individual pastime in the sense that it interests some men and bores others. Some like to observe human beings, others to experiment with mice. The world is big enough to hold all kinds and there is no logical priority for one interest as against another. But the word "pastime" is weak in describing what we mean. Sociology is more like a passion. The sociological perspective is more like a demon that possesses one, that drives one compellingly, again and again, to the questions that are its own. An introduction to sociology is, therefore, an invitation to a very special kind of passion.

~~Sociology is a passion~~
~~that drives one compellingly~~
~~to the questions that are its own~~
~~(a very special kind of passion)~~

SOCIOLOGY: A DISINVITATION?

By Peter L. Berger

To regain its impact, sociology must return to its original calling of studying major issues in an unbiased way.

Sociology has a broad mandate—the study of every aspect of human society—and its most influential thinkers have applied rigorous scientific methods to the discipline. In the late 1800s Emile Durkheim pioneered the use of objectivity; a few decades later Max Weber demonstrated that research could lead to wide-ranging theories about cultures; and the leading American sociologists of this century, including the contemporary scholar Peter Berger, have valued empirical field work and comparative studies. But now Berger worries that his discipline is in danger of losing its proud legacy because today's sociologists are unable to see large trends and unwilling to forgo partisan advocacy in their writing. He argues that the field's revitalization lies in returning to its roots: trying to understand the complexities and changes of modern culture.

Director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University, Berger is also well known for his study of religion. His 12 books include Invitation to Sociology (1963) and The Capitalist Revolution (1986).

At this stage of my life I find that I have little stake in my identity as a sociologist. If asked for my academic discipline, I will routinely come up with this identification, but it has little to do with what I do or what I consider myself to be. I pay scant attention to what people in the discipline are engaged in, and I daresay that they return the compliment. This is quite all right. But I am sometimes reminded of the fact that, in my impetuous youth, I rather passionately invited others to this discipline, both in published writings and in my teaching. Should I repent this action? Should I perhaps issue a solemn disinvitation, so as not to be responsible for yet more innocent students being seduced into what may well be a bankrupt enterprise? I think that the answer to both questions is a less than hearty no: no, because I continue to think that the sort of sociology I once advocated is as valid today as it ever was—less than hearty, because I am aware of the fact that this is not what most people who call themselves sociologists are actually doing.

It is a truism to say that we live in a time of massive and rapid change. This is only an accelerated phase of the vast transformation brought on by the process of modernization first in Europe and then increasingly throughout the world. It is instructive to recall that sociology as a discipline arose precisely as an effort to understand, and if possible to gain

greater control over, this huge transformation. This was clearly the case in the three countries in which distinctive sociological traditions first arose—France, Germany, and the United States. To understand, perhaps even to control, modernity—an awesome proposition! It is no wonder, then, that the early masters of sociology were individuals of impressive intellectual and, in most cases, personal powers. It would be misguided to expect their successors, several academic generations down the line, to possess comparable characteristics. But one would expect a certain continuity of intellectual stance, a continuity in form if not in substance. It is difficult to argue that this is the case. Sociology in its classical period—roughly between 1890 and 1930—dealt with the “big questions” of the time; sociology today seems largely to avoid these questions and, when not avoiding them, deals with them in exceedingly abstract fashion.

The classical sociologists were careful to look at social reality objectively, without regard to their own biases or wishes (what Max Weber summed up in the much-maligned notion of “value-freeness”); large numbers of sociologists now proudly announce their nonobjectivity, their partisan advocacy. Sociology in America at one time was intent on cultivating a robust empiricism, which Louis Wirth summed up as “getting one's hands dirty with research” and which one could also call the cultivation of a sociological nose. Today many sociologists take pride in the



abstract, antiseptic quality of their work, comparable to the fine model-building of theoretical economists. One wonders whether these people have ever interviewed a live human being or participated with curiosity in a live social event.

I shall address these concerns in light of four important developments that have taken place since World War II. Each of these developments completely surprised most, if not all, sociologists. What is more, even after these developments had come sharply into view, sociologists found themselves unable to explain them or to make sense of them within a frame of sociological theory. Given the importance of these developments, the failure of sociology either to predict, or at least to apprehend, them indicates that something is seriously wrong here.

Case one. In the late 1960s and early '70s a cultural and political upheaval took place in the major Western industrial societies. It was a total surprise. Looked at through the spectacles of conventional sociology, it posed a tantalizing question: how could it be that some of the most privileged people on earth, indeed in history, turned violently against the very society that had made them thus privileged? If one turns to American sociology, as it was taught then and still is in numerous college courses, one finds the proposition that people become more conservative as they become more affluent. This proposition may have been quite valid up to the aforementioned event. It certainly was not valid as the politico-cultural cataclysm occurred, and it is no longer valid today. On the contrary, both in politics and in culture the "progressive" movements have been socially located in the affluent upper middle class—the New Left, the antiwar movements, feminism, environmentalism, and so on.

Sociologists of the left have tried, very unsuccessfully, to squeeze the phenomenon into Marxist categories like the "proletarianization of the middle class." More "bourgeois" colleagues have mumbled something about "status politics." But the best interpretation is probably that most sociologists were very much a part of the phenomenon. The generation

that entered the profession in those years, now tottering through tenured middle age, had all the liberal peace signs emblazoned on their hearts. To them, this was a conflict between the good guys and the bad guys, and it still is—though the politically correct markers have shifted somewhat. People are reluctant to accept sociological explanations of their own commitments—even if they are professional sociologists. In other words, the failure of sociology to apprehend this development is largely due to ideological blinders.

Case two. One of the fundamental transformations in the contemporary world has been the rapid economic ascendancy of Japan and other East Asian countries. What is happening here is not just an economic miracle of enormous proportions, occurring at breathtaking speed; but the first instance of successful modernization in a non-Western cultural context that should be of special interest to sociologists. Put simply, Japan is important for Western understanding, not so much of Japan, but of the West. Again, no one expected East Asia's rise. At a conference that took place in the 1950s and which some participants still recall uncomfortably, there was widespread agreement that Confucianism was one of the most formidable obstacles to development in South Korea and in the Chinese societies. Today, this cultural heritage is commonly cited as one of the causes of the East Asian economic success stories.

Modernization theory faltered in the wake of the late '60s, when it was widely derogated as an ideology of Western imperialism. Leftist sociologists meanwhile were busy giving birth to so-called dependency theory, according to which capitalism necessarily perpetuates underdevelopment; the solution, of course, was to be socialism. There is a bizarre synchronicity between empirical and theoretical developments. Just as capitalist East Asia was bursting into astonishing economic growth and prosperity while all the socialist societies were sinking into hopeless stagnation, more and more sociologists were proclaiming their allegiance to a new theory.

For all fairness, my second case is not, like the first, in that there

has indeed been a considerable effort by sociologists to understand the phenomenon, even if they did not anticipate it. It is a formidable task to modify the concept of modern society, as it developed from, say, Max Weber to Talcott Parsons, with insights to be gained from the new non-Western modernity.

This is a very "big question" indeed. It is uncongenial to people whose perspective is parochially ethnocentric and who are committed to methods that do not lend themselves to "big questions." What is called for is a sociology in the classical vein, grounded in a knowledge of history, methodologically flexible, and imbued with a cosmopolitan spirit endlessly curious about every manifestation of human life. Needless to say, sociologists practicing their craft in such a vein are difficult to find. Worse, one may say that both the training and the reward system of the profession are cleverly (if, probably, unintentionally) designed to prevent such people from emerging.

Case three. Another concept that seemed well-established in the 1950s and '60s was so-called secularization theory. Briefly put, it posits the notion that modernization necessarily brings with it a decline of religion in human life, both in terms of social institutions and of individual consciousness. This notion has a long history in Western thought, going back at least to the Enlightenment of the 18th century, if not further. Modernity, built on the foundations of science and technology, brought with it an increasingly rational mindset that no longer found plausible the presumably irrational religious interpretations of the world.

Leaving aside the questionable presumption as to the irrationality of religion, secularization theory seemed grounded in empirical evidence and was consequently open to empirical falsification. By the late 1970s it had been falsified with a vengeance. As it turned out, the theory never had much empirical substance to begin with. It was valid, and continues to be valid, for one region of the world, Europe, a few scattered territories, and a fairly thin stratum of Western-educated intellectuals everywhere. The rest of the world is as fervently religious as it ever was, and arguably

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more so than earlier in this century.

What made the theory altogether untenable was the evangelical resurgence in America during the 1970s, first brought to widespread attention by the presidential candidacy in 1976 of Jimmy Carter, a devout Southern Baptist, and a little later by the noisy appearance of the "moral majority" political organization and similar groups. Suddenly it became obvious that, though little noticed in intellectual milieus, American society contained millions of "born-again" Christians and, alarmingly, they kept growing and growing, while mainline churches went into a fairly steep demographic decline. The evangelical phenomenon served to underline a more fundamental fact: America differed from Europe precisely in its religious character.

Beyond the United States, though, the event that rattled the theory linking modernization to secularism was the Iranian revolution of the late '70s. Once again a momentous event came into view that, theoretically, should not have occurred at all. Since then, religious upsurges of every sort have been erupting all over the world. And sociologists of every coloration continue to be baffled. Whether politically on the left or not, they suffer from ideological blinders when it comes to religion, and the tendency is then to explain away what cannot be explained. But ideology apart, parochialism is an important factor here too. Sociologists live in truly secularized milieus—academia and other institutions of the professional knowledge industry—and it appears that they are no more immune than the sociologically untrained to the common misconception that one can generalize about the world from one's own little corner.

Finally, case four. This is the momentous collapse of the Soviet em-

pire, and what seems, at least for now, the worldwide collapse of socialism both as a reality and as an idea. It would be unfair to single out sociologists; just about nobody anticipated this revolution (including regiments of certified Sovietologists) and everybody is having great difficulty grasping it within any theoretical frame that makes sense. Still, it is worth stating that sociologists, even those with the relevant regional expertise, were no better than anyone else in predicting the event nor are they better in accounting for it. One must wonder how they will do in the years to come.

The collapse of the Soviet empire and the worldwide crisis of socialism pose an enormous challenge to sociological understanding of modernity. What is called for is a thorough rethinking of the relation between economic, political, and social institutions in a modern society. I am reminded of the old witicism, "If you're good for nothing else, you can still serve as a bad example." For sociological theory, "bad" examples such as socialism are just as useful as "good" ones. The more interesting question is not why communist societies have collapsed, but why Western ones have not. This is a basic theoretical point that much sociologizing has routinely overlooked: the "problem" is not social disorganization, but social organization—marriage rather than divorce, law-abidingness rather than crime, racial harmony rather than racial strife, and so on. We may safely assume that the common human pattern is faithlessness, violence, and hate. These manifestations of human nature hardly need explanation; it is needed in those instances in which, amazingly, societies manage to curb and civilize such propensities.

What do these cases disclose about what is sociology today? One can point to four symptoms: parochialism, triviality, rationalism, and ideol-

ogy. Each one is crippling. Their combination has been deadly. If one looks at the opus of the great classical sociologists, with Max Weber and Emile Durkheim in the lead, one is reminded of Methodist founder John Wesley's dictum, "The world is my parish." Few sociologists could say this today, and those who do very often betray an embarrassing lack of historical depth.

A t t i s s u e is much more than a bias in favor of some sort of sophisticated cosmopolitanism. One can be an excellent physicist without ever having stepped outside one's own society; I know that this is not so for a sociologist. And the reason for this is simple. Modernization is the great transforming force in the world today, but it is not a uniform, mechanical process. It takes different forms, evokes different reactions. This is why sociology, the discipline par excellence for seeking to understand modernity, must of necessity be comparative.

This, of course, was one of Weber's root insights; it is more relevant today than ever. Thus sociologists must look at Japan in order to understand the West, at socialism in order to understand capitalism, at India so as to understand Brazil, and so on. Parochialism in sociology is much more than a cultural deficiency; it is the source of crippling failures of perception. It should be part and parcel of the training of every sociologist to gain detailed knowledge of at least one society that differs greatly from one's own—a feat that involves something many students shy away from: learning foreign languages.

Triviality too is a fruit of parochialism, but in the case of sociology the more important root is methodological. This ailment of the discipline goes back at least as far as the 1950s. In a futile and theoretically misguided effort to ape the natural sciences,

sociologists developed ever more refined quantitative methods of research. There is nothing wrong with this in and of itself. Sociology contains a good many questions that necessitate survey-type research; the better the quantitative methods, the more reliable will be the findings. But not all sociological questions require this approach, and some are of a character so as to require very different, qualitative approaches.

Sociology, as a science, will necessarily be an exercise in rationality. This is a far cry from assuming that ordinary social action is guided by rationality. The discipline of economics, alas, has refused to share this insight and continues to operate with a highly rational model. As a consequence, it fails spectacularly, over and over again, to understand, let alone predict, the dynamics of the marketplace. A good many sociologists seek to emulate economics, adapting theoretical models based on the "rational-action paradigm" to their own discipline. We may confidently predict that the intellectual results of this approach will closely resemble those in economics. Yes, sociology is a rational discipline; every empirical science is. But it must not fall into the fatal error of confusing its own rationality with the rationality of the world.

To some extent these criticisms correspond to those of C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). Mills, who died in 1962, wrote before the ideological seachange of the late 1960s overtook the field. We cannot know what Mills would have done, had he lived through this period. We do know what large numbers of his readers did, especially those who were most impressed by his criticisms. They plunged into an ideological delirium, mostly shaped by Marxist and quasi-Marxist assumptions, which seemed to provide remedies for all ailments of the field. This school provided a theoretical orientation that certainly dealt with "big questions," did so in an international frame of reference ("world-systems," no less), was not greatly enthused about quantitative methods, and finally, while considering itself to be thoroughly scientific, also assumed that most ev-

eryone else was running around afflicted with "false consciousness."

Unfortunately, the answers to the "big questions" turned out to be wrong, and the world refused to behave in the way the theory predicted. The worst consequence of the ideologization of the discipline that took place in the 1960s and '70s is the persistent belief that objectivity and "value-freeness" are impossible, and that sociologists, understanding this, should expressly operate as advocates.

This stance need not be restricted to the left at all. In the great methodological disputes during the classical period of sociology, especially in Germany, it was thinkers on the right who took this position most forcefully. The antidote to the "false ideal" of objectivity was a "German science," and the most elegant formulation of advocacy science came from no less a personage than the Nazi propagandist Josef Goebbels—"Truth is what serves the German people."

As the Left declines in American intellectual life, if it is declining, other ideologies can be observed adopting the same stance of subjectivity. It transforms science into propaganda and marks the end of science wherever it is adopted. Feminists and multiculturalists are the leading representatives of this stance in the American social sciences today, but we may expect others to appear. Some may well be on the right.

In diagnosing the condition of sociology, one should not view it in isolation. Its symptoms tend to be those afflicting intellectual life in general. Other human sciences are in no better shape. Most economists are captive to their rationalist assumptions; large numbers of political scientists seem to fall into the same trap. Anthropologists are probably more ideologized than practitioners of any other social science discipline, and people in history and the humanities seem to fall for every doctrinal fashion that comes flying over the Atlantic, each more obscurantist and intellectually barbaric than its predecessor.

Sociology is not so much a field as a perspective; if this perspective fails, nothing is left. Thus one can study the economy, or the political system, or the mating habits of the Samoans

from perspectives that are quite different, one of which is sociology. The sociological perspective has entered into the cognitive instrumentarium of most of the human sciences with great success. Few historians have not somewhere incorporated a sociological perspective into their work. Unlike most other human scientists, sociologists cannot claim a specific empirical territory as their own. It is mostly their perspective that they have to offer. The ailments precisely effect the dissolution of this perspective, thereby making sociology obsolete.

One could argue that such obsolescence is not a great intellectual disaster, since what sociology originally had to offer has been largely incorporated into the corpus of other fields. But, when one looks at these fields, one can only reach the conclusion that they are badly in need of a good dose of sociology, as the discipline was understood in its classical period, and not just bits and pieces of sociological lore that have been assimilated. In other words, there are good intellectual reasons why one should not applaud the possible demise of the discipline.

But can this fate be averted? I am not at all sure. The pathology now goes very deep indeed. It is possible to suggest some conditions for such a reversal of fortunes: a sociology that returns to the big questions of the classical era, that is cosmopolitan and methodologically flexible, and is emphatically and militantly anti-ideological. But what of the institutional requirements for such a reversal? Clearly it could not be effected by conferences, manifestos, and other fugitive intellectual endeavors. The revival of the discipline must be based in one or more of the academic programs in which sociologists are trained, probably (if regrettably) in elite universities. And the process has to be in the hands of younger people, those with two or more decades of active professional life ahead of them—because this is what it will take. Is any of this likely? Probably not. But one of the root insights of classical sociology is that human actions can be surprising. ♦

Doctors about the worth of their services are seldom sustained by the practitioners; and if ever raised, are promptly warded off with invocations of professional standards with their presumptive power to ensure integrity and progress. Looking at this matter realistically, however, one can find few grounds for assuming that all the professions inherently gravitate towards honest service rather than monopolistic exploitation and parasitism. In reality it all depends on what kind of behaviour leads to wealth and status (or, to put it another way, on the link between true merit and reward). To analyse various types of work from this standpoint would provide a useful programme for the sociology of occupations, which might lift it above its present level of uninspired cataloguing. Seen from this angle, the social sciences appear as an activity without any intrinsic mechanisms of retribution, where anybody can get away with anything.

Criticizing the prevailing trends and the top people may be profitable if done with the backing of a powerful pressure group - perhaps a fifth column subsidized from abroad. But unfortunately, the contours of truth never coincide with the frontiers between embattled parties and cliques. So, a free thinker can consider himself lucky if he lives in a setting where he merely gets cold-shouldered rather than imprisoned and called 'a pig who fouls his nest' - to use the felicitous expression which the Soviet police chief, Semichastny, applied to Boris Pasternak.

Whether exhortation helps much may seriously be doubted; for despite centuries of inveighing against stealing and cheating, these misdemeanours do not appear to be less common nowadays than at the time of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, however, it is difficult to envisage how any standards whatsoever can continue to exist without some people taking upon themselves the task of affirming them and preaching against vice.

As one could spend a whole life and fill an encyclopedia trying to expose all the foolish antics which pass for a scientific study of human conduct, I have limited myself to a few

important examples. In any case, demolishing the idols of pseudo-science is relatively easy, and the more interesting and important task is to explain why they have found and are finding such a wide acceptance.

I do not envisage that this blast of my trumpet will bring down the walls of pseudo-science, which are manned by too many stout defenders: the slaves of routine who (to use Bertrand Russell's expression) 'would rather die than think', mercenary go-getters, docile educational employees who change ideas by the status of their propounders, or the woolly minded lost souls yearning for gurus. Nevertheless, despite the advanced stage of cretinization which our civilization has reached under the impact of the mass media, there are still some people about who like to use their brains without the lure of material gain; and it is for them that this book is intended. But if they are in a minority, then how can the truth prevail? The answer (which gives some ground for hope) is that people interested in ideas, and prepared to think them through and express them regardless of personal disadvantage, have always been few; and if knowledge could not advance without a majority on the right side, there would never have been any progress at all - because it has always been easier to get into the limelight, as well as to make money, by charlatanism, doctrinairism, sycophancy and soothing or stirring oratory than by logical and fearless thinking. No, the reason why human understanding has been able to advance in the past, and may do so in the future, is that true insights are cumulative and retain their value regardless of what happens to their discoverers; while fads and stunts may bring an immediate profit to the impresarios, but lead nowhere in the long run, cancel each other out, and are dropped as soon as their promoters are no longer there (or have lost the power) to direct the show. Anyway, let us not despair.

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READING-3

1 Social research in an ethical context

This book is about some of the ethical problems that arise in connexion with social research. At first glance, these problems seem rather mixed: what questions ought a government to include on its census forms, what information about individuals ought to be published openly or in disguised form, what constraints on a social inquiry ought to be placed by the sponsor who pays for it, what practical use ought to be made of scientific knowledge about how societies operate, and so on. Do individuals have an absolute right to privacy, or is this right overridden by the needs of the search for knowledge? Yet despite their apparent heterogeneity, these problems all arise out of a fairly simple social process, a process that may be thought of as a structured interaction between various kinds of people. Social research is systematic inquiry into the ways in which people, and the social institutions that they create and operate, behave in relation to one another and to their environment. This research takes many forms, ranging from asking simple questions about preferences among brands of breakfast cereals to observing over many years how a newly established parliament establishes its customary modes of procedure. In this book our attention will be focused on part of this range of inquiries, mainly on those carried out by sociologists, social anthropologists and psychologists, both in the real world and within the artificially contrived environment of the laboratory. These are the kinds of social inquiry where ethical issues have been most clearly seen and most often discussed. Nevertheless many of the comments that arise from discussing these inquiries are relevant to other areas of social research where so far ethical matters have been ignored.

Whatever form the inquiry may take whether it lasts for

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minutes or years, and whether it occurs in the back of beyond or in a laboratory on the university campus, there are normally four groups or individuals in the process. First there are the people whose preferences for cereals or propensities for parliamentary innovation form the focus of the inquiry. These people are usually referred to as the 'subjects' of the inquiry, or the 'objects' of the research. Neither term is satisfactory and I shall call them 'citizens', for it is their rights and duties as fellow human beings, and as members of organized societies, with which we shall be mainly concerned. Then there are the people who carry out the inquiry and who analyse the findings; these are the 'scientists', though we shall not forget that they too are citizens and that they do not escape from their commitments as members of society by putting on the white coat, blue overalls or safari jacket of the social scientist. Most of the problems we shall consider impinge on the relation between the scientist and the citizens he (or she) studies. But there are two other parties to the process of inquiry who have interests and obligations that have to be taken into account. In most instances of social inquiry there is a sponsor, some philanthropic patron, charitable foundation, commercial organization or government department which provides the financial and material resources for the inquiry to be made and which may, in many cases, want some tangible return for the investment it has made. Sometimes scientists are able to sponsor their own inquiries, and sometimes a group of citizens may sponsor an inquiry into some aspect of its own affairs. But in general there is a separate sponsor whose interest in the inquiry differs from those of the scientist and the citizens. Lastly, in many instances but not in all, there are the individuals and institutions who are known sometimes as facilitators but whom we shall call gatekeepers, who control access to the citizens. For example, in a country like Britain, anyone with a clipboard or tape recorder in his, or more often her, hand can stop citizens in the street and ask their opinion about who is going to win the next election; no gatekeeper intervenes. But to be able to ask the same question of a sample of workers in a factory, the scientist may first have to negotiate with managements and trade unions, even though these

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bodies are not themselves the focus of his inquiry. Likewise a scientist who is interested in, say, the inheritance of property may be able to carry out his inquiries in his own country without needing to obtain permission from any authority; but if he tries to make the same inquiry in another country he may first have to satisfy the foreign government that the inquiry is in the national interest, as it sees it, and that the investigation will be carried out in a way acceptable to it. Gatekeepers may control access not only to citizens but also to archives and other records, and sometimes to reports on other scientific inquiries. Indeed, after a scientist has completed his research he may need permission from somebody not directly connected with the inquiry before he is free to publish or act on what he has found out.

Social inquiry may thus be seen as a process of interaction and negotiation between scientist, sponsor, gatekeeper and citizens. These four parties to the process do not, of course, exist in isolation from the rest of the world. The wider community is involved in the process in several ways. The sponsor is often some branch of government and thus ostensibly the embodiment of some aspect of public interest, however this may be defined. The output of the process of inquiry is often publication, i.e. transmission to the world at large, and this may be followed by action taken by the community or by some part of it.

If the scientists and others directly concerned with a particular inquiry all belong to the same national or cultural community, there is likely to be some amount of consensus among them about basic social values, though, so I shall argue, social research as we know it depends on the acceptance of a plurality of interests and views within the community. In the special case of what I call the 'colonial situation', there is minimal consensus of views between the citizens and the scientists; inquiries and publications then take a distinctive form. But whether or not they share a common set of cultural values, each of the parties in the process of inquiry is certain to have its own interests and values, its own expectations or lack of them, about what may or should emerge from the inquiry, and maybe its own ideas about what is morally right or wrong in making inquiries into social phenomena. It may have

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its own perception of the nature of social science. These ideas and expectations constrain the range of possibilities in social research, and impinge not only on the ethical issues with which we are concerned but on other aspects of the process of inquiry as well. A great deal has been written about how to conduct empirical inquiries in social science, but most of the topics in handbooks on scientific method do not concern us here. We are not primarily concerned with questions of internal validity and reliability and the like, but only with those aspects of the negotiations between the parties, or of the lack of negotiation, that raise ethical issues.

By ethical problems I mean those that arise when we try to decide between one course of action and another not in terms of expediency or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong. We all face, and solve, problems of this kind in everyday life. For example, most people probably have views one way or the other on whether to facilitate the procurement of abortion, to boycott fruit from South Africa, to encourage separate schools for Pakistani girls in Britain, and to oppose demands for euthanasia. For most of us, our views on these and similar matters are determined mainly by reference to ends which we hold to be good or bad in themselves; we may believe, for instance, that the institutionalized inequality entailed by apartheid is wrong in itself, and that to buy South African fruit would be to condone or support this wrong. Likewise, in social science, we may believe that if, as scientists, we are told something in confidence by a citizen we cannot betray that confidence by passing on the information without the citizen's permission, because betrayal is wrong in itself. But just as we may weigh our moral dislike of apartheid against the likely effectiveness of our boycott in contributing to its disappearance (or to its perpetuation), so likewise as scientists we may weigh our obligation to the citizen against the likely harm (or good) to him and to mankind in general that our betrayal of his confidence may entail. In other words, ethical considerations do not necessarily always override considerations of other kinds. Hence, in discussing social research, we must look at practical and pragmatic considerations whenever these bear on ethical issues as they arise in practice.

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Honesty may sometimes pay but there are other times when a price has to be paid for being honest, and we should know what the price is before we decide to buy.

Ethical problems are not confined to everyday life and social inquiry. They arise in the natural sciences and in medicine as well. But just as the social sciences differ from the natural sciences in certain structural features, and in their intellectual achievements so far, so do the ethical issues that arise in the two branches of science. Indeed, it is partly because of these differences in achievement that the ethical issues differ. In recent years there has been a good deal of discussion about ethical issues raised by research on nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction, by the use of high technology on a planet with limited resources, by the possibilities of embryo transfer and genetic engineering. But the ethical problems encountered in natural sciences and, to a lesser extent, in medicine relate to the application of scientific knowledge in the real world rather than to the process of scientific discovery in the laboratory. Though in the future the balance may shift, in social science at the present time ethical problems are posed by the process of social inquiry itself at least as much as by the application of the scientific findings of these inquiries. We are certainly deeply concerned about the use made of information collected from individual citizens, and groups of citizens, in the course of social inquiry, but this use is, more often than not, little more than the application of common sense principles or traditional ways of behaving rather than of some newly discovered law of social interaction. For example, during the Vietnam war, social scientists asked peasants in Indochina questions designed to elicit the state of their morale and political allegiance; the ethical issue that arose was the alleged use of the banner of scientific inquiry to gain information for the old-fashioned selection of bombing targets, not the devilish application of some scientifically validated principle of morale formation.

Although most of medicine cannot be considered as a branch of social science, ethical issues are salient in both medical research and ordinary medical practice. In some contexts, there is close similarity between medicine and social science in the ethical

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problems they have to face, and I shall mention some of these. But medical ethics is a well-discussed topic (Barber et al. 1973), and there is no need for me to expand the scope of this book to deal adequately with it.

If we confine ourselves to a simple contrast between natural science and social science, ignoring the middle ground of medicine, then we might argue that ethical issues feature differently in the two branches of science because social science is comparatively immature. Indeed, some of its critics condemn social science to a state of permanent adolescence. In social science there is certainly as yet no corpus of interdependent propositions, tested against reality, that can match the formidable body of systematic discovery in natural science. Whether or not there ever will be is open to debate, but there is no doubt that at present there are perilously few tested generalizations in social science that might provide a reliable basis for a programme of social engineering, whether for good or ill. In other words, social science is still largely at an ideographic stage, whereas natural science has long ago moved on to nomothetic knowledge. Consequently, whereas ethical issues in natural science arise mainly in connexion with the practical application of the validated results of laboratory research, in social science they tend to arise at the stage of data collection as well.

But in my view there is a more fundamental difference than this between the two kinds of science. The four-part model of social inquiry that I sketched cannot be applied unchanged to natural science. There are certainly scientists and sponsors, and for certain kinds of research in natural science there are gatekeepers too, who, for example, may control access to expensive or scarce materials. But there are in nature no citizens, no fellow human beings with whom the natural scientist has to negotiate. There is no society for the prevention of cruelty to atoms, and although Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty may perhaps be understood to entail some kind of feedback relation between the atomic physicist and the particles he studies, the principle does not permit negotiation between them. Only when transmuted atoms and particles impinge on citizens do ethical problems arise.

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Hence the discussion of ethical problems in natural science turns much more on the application of, rather than the discovery of, scientific knowledge not only because there is so much that can be applied but also because only in its application does natural science impinge on the interests of citizens. Genetic engineering is an exception to the general rule, for here there are grounds for doubting whether scientists will have the technical capacity for controlling how artificial genes, the material by-products of intellectual inquiry, may apply themselves to citizens and to the environment. The exceptional status of genetic engineering is shown by the virtually unprecedented agreement among scientists not to pursue at all certain specified lines of research.

In general, ethical issues in natural science have arisen during the last thirty years because of our greatly increased ability, by utilizing recent scientific discoveries, to modify, deliberately and intentionally, the environment in which we live. The shift in the distribution of power that has occurred in natural science is, in the first instance, between man and nature, rather than between man and man, though it is only because man depends on nature that man's increased power to control or destroy nature raises ethical issues. Men have controlled and destroyed one another long before the emergence of social science, and as yet the contribution that social science can make to techniques of control and destruction is quite modest. The dangers inherent in social science inquiry lie in its potential contribution towards improving old forms of tyranny and oppression rather than its capacity to provide new ones. Yet because the subject matter of social science is people and their relations with one another, these dangers are inherent at all stages in the process of inquiry and not merely in the applications of the results of research.

Social science is younger than natural science and the discussion of ethical issues in social science is younger still. Serious and sustained consideration of ethical questions began in earnest only about twenty-five years ago. Some commentators write about these questions as if they are eternal, not bound by time and space and historical circumstance, and treat it as a fortunate accident that within the last few years social scientists have belatedly begun

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to think about them. The burst of interest in ethics during the last ten years does indeed give the appearance of being caused in part by a sense of guilt that these questions have been neglected for so long; we must try to make up for lost time. Handbooks on research methods, which previously had nothing to say on ethical matters, now often devote a section explicitly to discussions of ethics (e.g. Sjöberg and Nett 1968: 120-28, 327-32). One recent textbook (Smith 1975) even begins with a chapter on ethics, with the expressed intention of putting first things first. Ethical issues are now set out didactically in professional journals. Professional associations of sociologists, anthropologists and other social scientists have drawn up their own codes of ethics or have involved themselves in many acrimonious debates before coming to the conclusion that their ethical issues are far too complicated to be handled by a professional code. Elections to ethics committees of professional bodies have been contested by scientists who hold divergent views about the policy their association should adopt on ethical issues, and ethical considerations have influenced the choice of members to fill ordinary administrative positions (Berreman 1973a: 8). Sessions on ethics are held at annual professional conferences on the same footing as those on such familiar topics as stratification, kinship and deviance. A new label, 'ethicist', has appeared to identify a social scientist who concerns himself with the ethical implications of social inquiry. Ethical interest has become one more variable to be correlated with others; experiments show that psychologists express more stringent views on ethics than do most other people (Sullivan and Deiker 1973).

This activity among scientists has been matched by the major sponsors of social science research, some of whom have now codified the ethical terms and conditions on which they are prepared to provide financial support. In those countries where social inquiry has become a regular feature of the social scene even citizens, either individually or collectively, have begun to state explicitly the increasingly stringent conditions that must be met before they are prepared to cooperate in the process of social inquiry.

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Ethical issues may be only extrinsic to natural science but nevertheless, ever since the explosion of the first atomic bomb, many natural scientists have taken a lively professional interest in ethical questions that arise out of pure research as well as from its practical application. We might therefore interpret the growth of interest in ethics among some social scientists as merely another example of the immature, unsuccessful social science trying to emulate its more successful co-disciplines in the natural and medical sciences. The natural sciences have provided social scientists with models of inquiry in the past; why not also borrow from them their recently acquired social concern?

This diffusion effect exists but can account for only part of the increase of ethical awareness among social scientists. Nowadays there is a good deal more self-consciousness than there used to be among social scientists about the desirability or appropriateness of borrowing methods of procedure from the natural sciences. Although some continue to aim at building social science to a plan that matches that of natural science, others stress the irreconcilable differences between them. Very roughly speaking, the first group acclaims the actual or potential propositional or nomothetic characteristics of social science while the second sees social science as qualitative and interpretative. If a concern with ethics was due mainly to diffusion from natural science we would expect this concern to be more marked among members of the first moiety, who are much closer to natural science in most of their thinking, and less prominent among the second, whose orientation is closer to the humanities than to the so-called hard sciences. This is not so. Thus the fact that both branches of science have become aware of the ethical implications of their research activities at about the same time, immediately following the end of the Second World War, should not be attributed mainly to intellectual contagion. Certainly the actions of bodies such as the various national societies for social responsibility in (natural) science and the Association of Atomic Scientists have had some impact on social scientists. But a better analysis of what has happened in social science in this respect during the last thirty years must be based on changes in the wider social structure within which social scientists

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operate, changes which have had an effect also on the thinking and responses of natural scientists.

Increased awareness in ethical matters has its dangers. Before long lecture courses will be announced on 'Introductory ethics for social scientists' and 'Advanced ethics'. Proposals for a course on 'anthropological ethics' have already been made (Appeli 1976). But then the fashion will pass, and the next trendy subject will take its place. My fear will prove to be misplaced if social scientists, and the public at large, come to see that the current accentuation of interest in the ethics of social inquiry is not just a transient fad that will soon disappear but is rather the outcome of an historical process whose effects are likely to be with us for a long time to come. My thesis is that the recent increase in concern about what topics shall be investigated, where support for the inquiry shall come from, how the data shall be collected and aggregated, and how the results of the inquiry shall be published has not come about accidentally. It springs from an historical shift in the balance of power between the four parties to the research process, and from the institutionalization of social inquiry in the ambient culture of industrialized societies. It is one outcome of a movement away from positivism towards a hermeneutic view of knowledge, and from an evaluation of knowledge as a source of enlightenment to an evaluation in terms of power and property. The basis of ethical concern in social science is therefore significantly different from that of the growth of ethical awareness among natural scientists and among those who see themselves threatened by the application of natural science.

Social research entails the possibility of destroying the privacy and autonomy of the individual, of providing more ammunition to those already in power, of laying the groundwork for an invincibly oppressive state. Yet we would be fatally misled if we inferred that to avoid these objectionable consequences we should stop making social inquiries, or that the main threat to our liberties as citizens comes from the activities of social scientists. Douglas (1976:xiv) may create too rosy an impression when he says that 'We know of no single instance in which our research has injured anyone'; he cannot be referring to all of social

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inquiry (cf. Reynolds 1972:695). Nevertheless he is right to assert the relative innocuousness of social inquiry. The main dangers lie elsewhere, in the insensitive or malign application of traditional techniques of social control, in the unsophisticated utilization of existing information carelessly or with evil intent, and in the unmonitored working-out of social processes of concentration and homogenization. In a recent survey of *The technology of political control* (Ackroyd et al. 1977), almost no reference is made to any contribution by social science. In this book we are then concerned with an activity which is a threat, but only a minor threat, to liberty but which also constitutes the only technique whereby liberty and diversity may be preserved for the future and enhanced.

We can begin then by looking at the way in which this process of inquiry has altered during the last one hundred and fifty years or so, from the beginnings of organized social inquiry in the early nineteenth century up to the present time when, as so often in the past, social science is said to be in a state of crisis. I shall argue that initially empirical inquiries in social science conformed to a natural science paradigm, in which citizens and scientists were not only socially but also analytically and epistemologically unequal; the new knowledge which was expected to emerge was perceived as a source of enlightenment for the elite. With the passage of years, citizens have come much closer to scientists not only socially but, with the decline in positivist theories of knowledge, epistemologically as well. At the same time the power of sponsors and gatekeepers vis-à-vis the scientists has increased and, partly by analogy with natural science, the knowledge gained by social science inquiry has been seen by sponsors as a source of power. Gatekeepers and citizens, however, have in some instances come to perceive knowledge as a kind of private property, whether or not it may also be a source of power, for which there is only a restricted market. This new perception challenges the validity of the goal of a unified universalistic social science analogous, in the world of social relations, to natural science in the world of nature.

Empirical inquiry in sociology began with the poor, in social

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anthropology with natives, and in psychology, after an early period when highly trained respondents were used (Schultz 1969), with students. In all three contexts, scientists were powerful and the objects of their inquiries were weak (cf. Kelman 1972: 990). Hence the natural science paradigm could be applied and ethical issues did not arise. Nowadays the balance of power has changed and the foci of attention have been enlarged (Berreman 1973b: 58). I suggest that any worthwhile practical attempt to resolve ethical issues in social inquiry has to take into account the distribution of power between scientists, citizens, sponsors and gatekeepers, and will often involve negotiation between the parties rather than the inflexible application of operationalized rules of procedure. These negotiations will be facilitated if the parties take into account not only their diverse interests and their powers over one another but also their diverse perceptions of the objectives and likely outcome of the inquiry. This assumption of legitimate diversity or, in other words, of pluralism in culture and society is, in my view, a necessary condition for social science to flourish. By the same token, pluralism is also a necessary condition for the recognition of a right to privacy, for the need to balance the scientist's and sponsor's interests in finding out against the citizen's interest in preventing them from doing so; privacy may also include the citizen's right to remain in ignorance about himself. But nowadays the existence of pluralism is continually threatened by concentrations of power, and the future of social science is thus continually in jeopardy.

The following chapters fall into three groups. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I discuss the historical development of social inquiry from the early nineteenth century until now. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 I talk about various aspects of the process of inquiry: why people want to make inquiries or to prevent them from being made, the different settings in which they are made, and the ways in which the results of the inquiries can be made public or kept hidden. In the last two chapters I look at social scientists as a specialist group, and at their relation to the wider society.

2. The natural science paradigm

Little attention was paid to ethical problems by the pioneer social scientists who began to make systematic inquiries into various aspects of social life during the nineteenth century. Although many imperfections in their methods of social inquiry may be explained by the fact that, to a large extent, they were starting from scratch, it would be wrong to imagine that the absence of interest in ethics was due to the lack of any developed tradition of empirical research on which they might have drawn. A concern with ethics is not a methodological feature, like for example path analysis and one-way screens, that appears only as the result of many decades of trial and error in techniques of social inquiry. Ethical questions in other contexts had been under continual discussion for more than two and a half thousand years by the time the first social scientists got to work collecting data. The lack of ethical concern in the context of social inquiry springs not from lack of experience in handling ethical questions but from the particular perception of the process of inquiry held by the scientists and those who supported or tolerated their activities.

A convenient label for the model of social inquiry that characterized data collection and analysis during the nineteenth century is the natural science paradigm. By this I mean a process of inquiry in which the scientist treats the citizens as far as possible as he would treat natural or inanimate objects. The paradigm has the following features: (1) the participation of the citizens in the process of inquiry is limited to being observed or responding to questions and other stimuli supplied by the scientist; they have no part to play in deciding what shall be investigated, how the inquiry shall be carried out, how the data shall be interpreted

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IV

THE PROBLEM OF FUNCTIONALISM

THE NEED FOR MODELS IN SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

As we have shown in the previous chapters, the empirical study of social facts is a methodologically complex process. We do not observe societies or other social facts directly. All that we can observe is human behaviour, including, of course, linguistic behaviour. But sociology does not claim to be simply the science of human behaviour. It is concerned as Durkheim suggested with a reality exterior to the individual. Hence the question arises of how the gap is to be bridged between the phenomena which we observe and this reality 'exterior' to the individual.

It should be noted that this problem is not peculiar to the sociologist. It might be said that all the physicist observes are 'coloured shapes that move'. Yet he is quite prepared to talk in terms of 'electrons' and 'protons'. That is to say, he employs models even at the lowest level to enable him to draw inferences from one observed fact to another, or to explain the coexistence of observed phenomena. Thus if we are prepared to follow the example of the physicist, there is a way out of the sociologist's dilemma. Moreover, since what the physicist does is similar to what we all do all day and everyday, one wonders why sociologists have been so deeply disturbed by behaviourist scruples.

The important question for the sociologist is not whether he should interpret observed human behaviour in terms of models, but what sort of model he should employ. In the previous chapter, although throughout we insisted upon some sort of

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operational definition of theoretical concepts, nonetheless concepts were linked in terms of a model of the motivation of a hypothetical actor in the situation. The behaviour observed in these circumstances is given significance in terms of the model. For convenience we might refer to the sort of model used there as a 'subjective' model, because behaviour is understood in terms of its subjective meaning for a hypothetical actor in the situation. Or we may speak, following Parsons, of such studies employing an 'action frame of reference'.

The other sort of model which has been widely employed in sociology is that derived from the analogy between societies and organisms. We must now look in greater detail at the assumptions made when this sort of organic model is used, and at the possibility of statements derived from this model being verified.

THE MODEL OF THE ORGANISM

Now to some extent the organic type of model has fallen into disrepute in sociology, because some of the earlier writers like Herbert Spencer who used it seemed more concerned with preserving the analogy than with using the model as a source of verifiable hypotheses. Thus one finds some historians of sociological theory writing as though the theory of the social organism was a thing of the past, something belonging to the bad old days of the system builders. But this is misleading, for even though there may be an unwillingness to bring the model into the open, it is still used in many sorts of sociological studies, and most especially in social anthropology. Whenever we find the terms 'structure' and 'function' in sociology, there we may be sure the writer has in mind some conception of society as an organism. And this has been made perfectly clear in the paper in which the most famous 'functionalist' anthropologist, Radcliffe Brown, sought to justify the use of the concept of 'function'. Here he makes its dependence upon the organic analogy explicit. It will be useful, therefore, to take a long quotation from Radcliffe Brown's paper as the basis for the discussion in this chapter.

He writes as follows:—

For the further elaboration of the concept (function) it is convenient to use the analogy between social life and organic life. Like

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all analogies it has to be used with care. An animal organism is an agglomeration of cells and interstitial fluids arranged in relation to one another, not as an aggregate, but as an integrated living whole. For the biochemist it is a completely integrated system of complex molecules. The system of relations by which these units are related is the organic structure. As the terms are here used, the organism is not itself the structure, it is a collection of units arranged in a structure i.e. in a set of relations; the organism has a structure . . . As long as it lives the organism preserves a certain continuity of structure, although it does not preserve the unity of its constituent parts. It loses some of its constituent molecules by respiration and alimentary absorption. Over a period the constituent cells do not remain the same. But the structural arrangement of the constituent units does remain similar. The process by which the structural continuity of the organism is maintained is called life. The life process consists of the activities and interaction of the constituent cells of the organism, the cells and the organs into which the cells are united.

As the word function is here being used, the life of the organism is conceived as the functioning of its structure. It is through and by the continuity of the functioning that the continuity of the structure is preserved. If we consider any recurrent part of the life-process such as digestion, respiration, etc. its function is the part it plays in the contribution it makes to, the life of the organism as a whole. As the terms are here being used, a cell or an organism has an activity, and the activity has a function. It is true that we commonly speak of a secretion of gastric fluid as a function of the stomach. As the words are here used, we should say that this is an activity of the stomach, the function of which is to change the proteins of food into a form in which these are distributed by the blood to the tissues. We may note that the function of a recurrent physiological process is a correspondence between it and the needs of the organism.¹

Applying the analogy Radcliffe Brown continues:—

To turn from organic life to social life, if we examine such a community as an African or Australian tribe, we can recognize the existence of a social structure. Individual human beings, the essential units in this instance, are connected by a definite set of social relations into an integrated whole. The continuity of the social structure, like that of the organic structure is not destroyed by changes in the units. Individuals may leave the society by death or otherwise, others may enter it. The continuity is maintained by the

¹ Radcliffe Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, p. 176.

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process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of individual human beings and of organized groups into which they are united. The social life of a community is here defined as the functioning of the social structure. The function of any recurrent activity, such as the punishment of a crime or of a funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution which it makes to structural continuity.¹

There are obviously a number of ambiguities in these passages, but it is nonetheless possible to clarify the main lines of the analogy, which Radcliffe Brown is seeking to draw diagrammatically as follows:—

	BIOLOGICAL ORGANISM	SOCIAL ORGANISM
UNITS	Cell	Individual human being
STRUCTURE	Relations between cells	Relations between human beings
ACTIVITIES	Observed behaviour of cells	Observed behaviour of human beings and groups
FUNCTIONS	Activities' role in maintaining the structure or correspondence between the effects of activity and the needs of the structure	Activities' role in maintaining the social structure or correspondence between the effects of the activity and the needs of the social structure

Now there need be no dispute about the categories of 'units' and 'activities'. Both of them have reference to observable facts. Theoretical construction begins here with the introduction of the terms 'structure' and 'function', and in order to decide on the value of the organic model, what we have to do is to examine the way in which Radcliffe Brown uses these terms in order to see (a) whether their theoretical meaning is clear and (b) whether they are so defined that propositions using the terms structure and function are capable of being verified.

THE CONCEPT OF STRUCTURE

The term 'structure' is of crucial importance, because according to Radcliffe Brown's version of functionalism any activity is regarded as explained when it is shown that it has the effect of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

maintaining the social structure. But the analogy with the organism seems to suggest that there is more difficulty in observing the structure of a social organism. As Radcliffe Brown himself puts it: 'In an animal organism it is possible to observe the organic structure to some extent independently of its functioning. It is therefore possible to make a morphology which is independent of physiology. But in human society the social structure as a whole can only be observed in its functioning.'¹

Now we must ask here what exactly Radcliffe Brown means by organic structures being and social structures not being capable of being observed 'independently of their functioning'. Apparently the reason for this is that in the case of animal organisms the *spatial arrangement* of the cells is capable of being observed independently of any question of function. And clearly it is true that the spatial arrangement of human beings has no equivalent significance for the sociologist to that which the spatial arrangement of cells has for the biologist. It can be observed, of course. But the sociologist is not especially interested in it. It is not what he means by the social structure. In fact it must be admitted that, if by organic structure we mean the spatial arrangement of cells, then the term structure is being used in a quite different sense from that in which it is used in sociology, and the apparent clarity of the analogy is shown to be deceptive.

In fact it is only possible to preserve the analogy if we interpret the term structure in biology in a different sense entirely, in a sense more akin to that in which it is used in sociology. We must now see what this sense is and whether it is applicable to biological as well as sociological organisms.

Radcliffe Brown speaks of the social structure being capable of being observed only 'in its functioning'. What does this mean? Strictly speaking Radcliffe Brown has contradicted his own definitions in using this phraseology. For according to his own definition it is activities rather than structures which function. But probably he simply means here that the relations between units can only be deduced from the way in which the activities of one unit affects other units. If this is what is meant by social structure then clearly there is an analogous sense in which one may speak of a biological structure. In both cases the structure may be defined in terms of activities and the effect of these activities on units.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

But even then there is an important difference between biological and social organisms to notice. This is that the activities in terms of which the biological structure might be defined are the same activities which have the effect of maintaining the structure. In healthy organisms, at least, the activities of the units and organs are almost entirely confined to those which have the effect of maintaining the life of the organism. In the case of social organisms things are quite different. People do things involving the co-operation of other people. But these activities do not necessarily have the effect of maintaining the social structure. The task of maintaining the social structure is fulfilled by a number of secondary activities and these are the strict parallel of the activity of the units of a biological organism.

This has a further important consequence. In the case of biological organisms there is only one sort of explanation of an organic activity possible. We say that is explained when we have shown that it has the effect of maintaining a structure. This would be equally true of the secondary activities in a social system mentioned above. But it would be misleading to suggest that all activities must be explicable in these terms. The primary activities of human beings although they may be socially oriented may not have any role to play in the maintenance of the social structure.

Thus we should conclude that the biological model is only useful in suggesting explanations for some human activities. Individuals engage in various sorts of actions and in the course of doing so, enter into social relations with each other. If it is regarded as necessary that these social relations should be maintained, then the existence of certain other sorts of activities is to be expected. It is in the explanation of these other activities that the biological model might be useful.

THE CONCEPT OF FUNCTION

But we now have to notice that Radcliffe Brown does not say that these activities have the *effect* of maintaining a pattern of social relations or a social structure. He says they have the '*function*' of doing this. What is the justification for using the term '*function*' rather than the term '*effect*'?

A view sometimes encountered is that the idea of a functional relationship is always appropriate where there is a relation of

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a part-whole type, and this is the reason sometimes given by sociologists for the use of the concept of function both in sociology and biology. But against this it may be said that there are phenomena which are regarded as systematically interconnected in terms of a part-whole relationship, where the term function is not used, while in the case of biology, as we shall see later, there are other possible reasons for its use. It would seem to the present writer at least that there is no reason why the relationship between part and whole, as such, should not be described in terms of cause and effect. On the other hand if it is desired to have some special term it might be desirable to avoid using the term function because of its teleological overtones.

The problem involved in the use of the term function in sociology is precisely that of showing why a term with these teleological overtones is chosen. We are bound to ask whether this term is used because some sort of purposive activity or behaviour is envisaged. It will be worthwhile therefore to consider some ways in which activities may be thought of as having purposes. The following appear to be the most important.

1. The activity may be thought of as having been organized or 'set up' for a particular purpose, this purpose being given, for example in the aims clause of the constitution of associations.
2. The activity may be thought of as being purposive in the sense of directly helping to meet the basic needs of the population.
3. The activity may be thought of as fulfilling the intention of the person who carries it out.
4. The activity may be thought of as maintaining a set of social relations or rights and duties, which is essential for carrying out purposive activities in pursuit of individual and culturally-given ends by a population.
5. It may be thought of as carrying out the purposes of 'Society'.
6. It may be thought of as necessary for the survival of the social structure.

The term can quite clearly be profitably used in the first sense and is so used by people like Royal Commissioners investigating

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the workings of an institution and making recommendations. If they speak of the function of an activity they mean that the activity has a certain effect and that this effect is in turn a means to the achievement of some overall purpose, which they assume to be desirable. In this context it would also be possible to use the term dysfunction to describe an activity whose effect interfered with the attainment of the overall purpose. There is nothing wrong with the use of teleological language here. Such studies begin by assuming that an institution has a purpose and their object is to judge which activities are conducive to this purpose and which are not.

But studies of this kind are of a practical rather than a purely scientific nature. The sociologist's interest in a situation is of a different kind. He is interested in discovering the determinants of an activity and the significance of the ultimate ends of an institution for him is that their acceptance by the participants might serve to explain their activity. Thus he might use a model of purposive activity for *explanatory purposes*. The explanation takes the form of arguing that given the existence of the end the various activities of the institution are determined.

However, many sociologists and anthropologists have noted that the actual activities of individuals are often not consistent with the declared purposes of the institutions in which they play roles. Thus they have looked for other undeclared and perhaps unconscious purposes with which such activities are consistent. Thus Malinowski distinguishes between the 'charter' and the 'functions' of an institution and Merton between 'manifest' and 'latent functions'.¹

According to Malinowski the determining factors are simply the biological needs of the population. A particular activity is regarded as explained when it is shown that it satisfies one or other of man's biological needs. In this case again teleological language is justified if we assume that the members of a population wish to survive and wish their fellows to survive.

One might perhaps, in passing, note that this form of explanation is not as simple as Malinowski supposes it is. Biological needs are not all that clear-cut and it is possible for individuals to survive at various levels of need satisfaction. Moreover it is possible for an activity to go on even if it means the actual

¹ See Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* and Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Chapter 1.

destruction of a part of the population. So it might well be argued that the activities of the population are determined not by the imperative of satisfying biological needs but by a value system which calls for the satisfaction of their needs at a certain level. In this case, however, we should still be justified in talking of the function of the activities. Their effect (the satisfaction of biological needs at a particular level) is a means to the implementation of the value system.

The third usage of the term function need not concern us. Since no social orientation of action is involved, such explanations belong properly in the field of individual psychology.

In the fourth case, an individual's action is explained as being due to the need to ensure that some other individual's ends are attained. The action is seen as purposive in terms of a model which starts from the ends of the other individual. This however is only the simplest case. The action of C may be thought of as facilitating the action of B which in turn may be thought of as helping A to attain his ends. Thus C's action has a function in terms of A's purposes. So the network of interlocking chains of action may become more and more complex.

When a very high degree of complexity is attained it is sometimes imagined that a particular action has the sole purpose of maintaining the structure of society. But the 'structure of society' is itself something which can be explained. Different societies have different 'structures' because they fulfil different purposes. Thus what passes as necessary for maintaining 'the structure of society' is really only necessary for maintaining a particular set of social relations and that in turn is only necessary given that certain purposes must be attained. If this is true our model of sociological explanations is again cast in terms of purpose and we should not have any qualms about using the term function instead of the term effect.

One further interesting point is whether in a complex system of interaction the purposes to which all activities are directed are the purposes of concrete human beings or not. Clearly there is the case in which the mass of individuals became tools for the achievement of the purposes of the powerful. But it is sometimes also the case that the powerful themselves have no option but to follow certain purposes. Thus when we speak of a society being dominated by the 'profit motive' we do not simply refer to the deliberate pursuit of profits by a small number of individuals,

but much more to the fact that the culture pattern demands of the powerful that they should pursue monetary profit. We come close here to talking not of the purpose of individuals, but of the purpose of a system. However, the theoretical model is still seen in terms of the action frame of reference and the element of purposive action justifies the use of teleological language.

The fifth and sixth usages of the term function raise rather different problems. Here we do not encounter the model of a network of purposive individual activity, but rather an entity called society or simply the social structure. In the case of the fifth usage, moreover, this entity is personified and assumed to have purposes of its own. Nadel expresses the view clearly enough when he writes as follows:—

Consider that all explanations in terms of interdependence lead from one combination of data to other, 'anterior' ones; they present us with an infinitely moving system without beginning or end, even without conscious centres or pivots upon which the interconnected parts revolve. This infinite interaction can be given a beginning and an end only through introducing at some point or points the impetus or goal of an ulterior purpose, coming from without the system.¹ Physical science has no warrant to take this step; for it would imply the mystic assumption of an intelligence behind the machine which is the universe, and a Great Engineer who conceived its design. In the study of human society such a step is neither unwarranted nor mystic. Society and culture are made and worked by man. May we not assume that they are made and operate for man? The Great Engineer is merely Man in the abstract, and the Intelligence at the back of all things social, the Human Mind writ large. These are, of course, logical constructions which we, the observers, form out of our data.¹

Now much of what we have said in our previous chapters would appear at first sight to justify a logical construction of this type if such a logical construction seemed the most economical way of explaining the facts. The question, however, is whether 'the Great Engineer' is really demanded by the facts, or simply by the need to justify a superfluous theoretical concept. If, in the first place, we had simply spoken of effects rather than function would such a theoretical construction be called for at all? It might be argued, of course, that, in the case of a very

¹ Nadel, *The Foundations of Social Anthropology* (1951), p. 368.

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complex social system, such as was mentioned above, where the over-riding purpose of the system was capable of being considered apart from any particular group of individuals whose purpose it was, some purely theoretical construction is necessary. But it is to be doubted whether the notion of the Great Engineer is a useful concept of this kind, simply because it is not at all clear.

FUNCTION AND ORGANIC SURVIVAL

Finally, we have to consider the sixth usage of the term function which is Radcliffe Brown's own. This is the usage most closely connected with the concept of the organism. The implication here is that there is some sort of parallel with biology, where the use of a purposive term is justified because certain bodily processes are known to be essential to survival and survival may be thought of as the overriding purpose of the organism. (The question is, however, whether it is possible to *demonstrate* in sociology that certain processes are essential for survival in the same way in which it is possible in biology.)

Obviously there are important differences between the two cases. In the case of biological organisms it is possible to show that a particular activity has an effect which is conducive to survival, because, if the activity is not performed, the organism dies. Its structure and its units cease to exist. Or at least it becomes ill in ways which are clearly definable. But how far can social organisms be said to die or become ill?

Radcliffe Brown, himself, recognizes that there are important differences. Social organisms, he maintains, do not fall ill or die. They change their structural type. As he puts it:— 'while an organism that is attacked by a virulent disease will react thereto and, if its reaction fails, will die, a society that is thrown into a condition of functional disunity or inconsistency will not die but will struggle towards some sort of eunomia, some level of social health, and may, in the course of this change its structural type.'¹

Now what is the significance of this for the use of the term 'function'? In biology the justification for its use was that an activity could not merely be demonstrated to have a certain effects, but that, if it were not performed, certain other facts of

¹ Radcliffe Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

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a dramatic kind could be demonstrated, viz. death, disintegration and ill-health. The problem is 'can the fact of a change of structural type be demonstrated as clearly as the facts of death and ill-health?' If they cannot, it would be difficult to argue that the effects of an activity were of 'vital' importance for the social organism.

The difficulty here is that social organisms are always changing and that the differences between normal change and a change of structural type is apparently only a matter of degree. Hence the sociologist would have to make a relatively arbitrary decision as to when a change of structural type had occurred and when the activity whose significance was in question could be said to be fulfilling a vital function.

There are, however, a few cases in which a rough demonstration of this sort might be possible. The first of these is the case of a primitive community which has enjoyed a long period of social stability and in which, when it has come into contact with Western civilization, certain activities of a traditional sort have been displaced, and their displacement has led to a period of extensive instability and rapid change in this sort and other sorts of activity. One might have doubts in some cases about the assumption that the particular society was in fact stable in the precontact period. (Recent research amongst the peoples of Southern Africa for example shows how dubious such an assumption is.) But nonetheless one might agree that, relatively speaking, we had sufficient evidence here of stability followed by instability to justify our speaking of the displaced activities as having had a function in promoting the survival of the earlier structural type.

Again we might obtain similar evidence in the comparative study of civilized communities. Suppose, for example, we found two communities with a similar pattern of life, and in one of these some new activity appeared displacing an older form. It might be the intrusion of some new industry, or it might be the acceptance of a new religion by the people. Whatever it was, if its introduction was followed by extensive instability in the pattern of activities, while in the unaffected community people went stably on their accustomed ways, we should be able to speak of the function of those activities which were displaced in one community and which continued in the other.

It must be noted however that it is essential to have evidence

of stability followed by instability in the pattern of social activities, before we can speak in this way. Too often anthropologists have regarded change as necessarily dysfunctional. When they are asked to show why they regard it in this way, they contrast the new social pattern with the old, claiming that the old represents the healthy social organism. But this standard of health has to be defined by contrast with unhealthy or unstable states, so that, in effect, stability is defined in terms of instability and instability in terms of stability.

Even more serious a lapse is the attribution of functions to activities in a society studied at a single moment of time. If it is suggested that the term function is justifiable because what is claimed is that if the activity alleged to have a function were not performed, the structure or a part of it would collapse, or be temporarily dislocated and then change its type, then it must not be used, except perhaps hypothetically, until there is evidence as to what does in fact happen when it is not performed. Yet it would seem to be almost the normal practice of anthropologists to use the term function as loosely as this.

It seems likely that when this is done, anthropologists are in fact falling back on an entirely different usage of the term function. Implicitly they are using it in the fourth of the senses listed above, where the effect of a particular activity is seen as conducive to the maintenance of a system of social relations, which is in turn conducive to the attainment of certain ulterior ends. There is nothing wrong with this sort of explanation, provided that there is evidence of such ulterior ends playing a determining role in the society. The danger is that if the nature of the theoretical model which is unconsciously being used is not made explicit, the anthropologist is likely to interpret as 'functional' those activities which fit into his own scheme of goals and values, and what is more, represent them as essential to the survival of the society. It cannot be too strongly pointed out that explanations of social activities as performing functions in this sense carry no implication that without these activities the society would not survive. All that they imply is that without them certain goals would not be achieved.

In certain instances, then, there is a tendency for sociologists, who start by giving functional explanations in the sense appropriate to the organic theory, to fall back on explanations of a different sort. This latter sort of explanations in no way depends

upon the organic model. It depends upon a theory of social interaction.

MERTON'S CRITIQUE AND DEFENCE OF FUNCTIONALISM

Merton's famous critique and defence of the functionalist method in his essay 'Manifest and Latent Functions' does not, unfortunately, help to clarify these problems. He insists throughout his essay that, although motivations must be included in the data collected for purposes of functional analysis, nonetheless function has nothing to do with motivation. 'Motive and function', he tells us 'vary independently.' He also holds that some concept of the needs of the social system is vital to sociological analysis. Yet he can do no more than note as a problem the difficulty of establishing such needs objectively, and the actual cases which he quotes of 'latent functions' appear to refer quite definitely not to the needs of the system but to the purpose of groups of individuals.

Thus in his 'Paradigm for Functional Analysis' he has this to say about the category of needs:—

Embedded in every functional analysis is some conception tacit or expressed, of the functional requirements of the system under observation. As noted elsewhere this remains one of the cloudiest and empirically most debatable concepts in functional theory. As utilized by sociologists, the concept of functional requirement tends to be tautological or ex post facto; it tends to be confined to the conditions of survival of a given system; it tends, as in Malinowski, to include biological as well as social needs.

This involves the difficult problem of establishing types of functional requirements (universal vs. specific; procedures for validating the assumption of their requirements; etc.)¹

Yet despite this he is quite prepared to define the term 'functions' as including 'those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system.' But what is 'adaptation' supposed to mean? Apparently adaptation to a set of needs of the system which cannot be objectively determined.

Thus, when he comes to draw his distinction between manifest and latent functions, Merton has to either redefine latent functions as meaning 'unintended consequence', a term which

¹ Merton, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

raises no difficulties about adaption to needs, or to suggest some degree of adaptiveness about the consequences which has reference to the motives and purposes of individuals. For example as instances of the sociologist's investigation of 'latent functions' Merton gives the following:—'the consequences of the new wage plan, for, say, the trade union in which the workers are organized or the consequences of a propaganda programme, not only for increasing its avowed purposes of stirring up patriotic fervour, but also for making large numbers of people reluctant to speak their minds when they differ with official policies'.¹

Here we have (a) a reference to 'consequences' (b) seen as functional or dysfunctional from the point of view of the motives of certain groups such as trade unionists, people wanting to speak their minds and people not wanting other people to speak their minds.

What we find, in fact, is that, despite the verbal ambiguity which enables it to give the appearance of solving some of the traditional problems of functionalism, Merton's essay does not show how 'consequences' can be thought of as 'adaptive' without making reference to some concept of motive and purposive action. He thinks that he has found a justification for functionalism because he has seen the very real difference between explaining an action in terms of its intention and explaining it in terms of another purposive model which does not refer to the intentions of the actor carrying out the action to be explained. But this other purposive model need by no means be one which requires the establishment of the needs of a social system. It might simply be that implied in our fourth usage, a model to which Merton gives all too little attention. In fact our consideration of the views of functionalist theorists leads inevitably to the view that for greater precision in the formulation of sociological hypotheses a far more detailed model analysing the network of social interaction in terms of the motives of hypothetical actors is absolutely essential. We shall return to a consideration of such a model in the following chapter.

THE CLAIMS AND THE WEAKNESSES OF FUNCTIONALISM

Before we leave the discussion of functionalist theory, however,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

it is worth noticing that there are certain features of the functionalist approach which account for its widespread appeal. It does serve to meet certain important problems which are peculiar to sociology and it is worthwhile listing these, so that when we do turn to the elaboration of another model, we shall be able to ask whether it is able more adequately to deal with these problems.

The claims of functionalism appear to be as follows:—

1. It has emphasised the importance of the social as distinct from the individual determinants of human behaviour.
2. It has drawn an important distinction between explanation in terms of the motives of individuals and explanations in terms of the requirements of social systems.
3. It has excluded speculation about human motives and has thus appeared to meet the behaviourist type of criticism of sociology.
4. It has sought to substitute objectively determinable factors (e.g. the needs of the social structure) for purely subjective ones as the determinants of social systems, thus attempting to exclude all value judgements from sociology.
5. It has done justice to the fact that social activities do not merely have immediate and isolated consequences but also systematic long-term ones.

These are extremely important claims and it is because it makes them that functionalism has to be taken seriously as a contribution to sociological theory. Nonetheless it may be asked whether the degree to which functionalism meets the requirements of sociological theory, which it itself sets out, is not more apparent than real.

The consideration which we have put forward in this chapter, for instance, would lead us to ask some of the following questions:—

1. Is not the effect of functionalism's attempt to demarcate social and individual determinants of human behaviour in a hard-and-fast way merely to produce an obscure definition of the social?
2. Does the true distinction between the social and individual determinants of behaviour not lie in the fact that the former is the product of social interaction and is this concept not

- closely akin to, though much more complex than, the concepts in terms of which individual action is explained?
3. Does not the attempt to exclude all discussion of purpose from sociological analysis result in the exclusion of an illuminating and legitimate source of data?
 4. Are value judgements really excluded by relating activities to the needs of the system or are they merely concealed in the obscure definition of these needs?
 5. Does not the validity of the whole approach rest upon the applicability of the notions of 'survival value' to human activities and is this notion really applicable?

Serious consideration of these questions must serve to throw doubt on the functionalist approach. The 'needs of the system' cannot be so decisively demonstrated as functionalism supposes, because of the difficulty of demonstrating that any activity is vital for the system's survival. Hence what often passes for such a demonstration is the explanation of an activity in terms of the contribution which it makes to the attainment of certain ends, the necessity of which the functionalist takes for granted. Similarly functionalism only appears to exclude reference to subjective motives. As we saw in the examples of 'latent functions' given by Merton above, in practice the functionalist does relate institutions and activities to the aims of individuals and groups. It would be much better therefore to acknowledge this, and to seek to show clearly through empirical proofs what aims, ends or purposes are held by the participants in the situation.

On all these points then, functionalism would appear to be making false claims. It appears valid only when we require only the roughest of proofs. This may be the case when we are witnessing a rapid period of social change such as occurs in the social contact situation or when we are all agreed that certain 'needs of the system' must be satisfied. But as soon as we demand any exact definition of the categories of 'survival value' or the 'needs of the system' we find that they cannot be given.

One point raised by functionalism, however, does withstand criticism. This is the fifth of those mentioned above, and the point behind Merton's distinction between manifest and latent functions. There is a distinction between the immediate and isolated and the long-term and systematic consequences of an activity. If, therefore, we seek to replace functionalism with a

model based upon the notion of interaction, we should see to it that this model is capable of emphasising the same distinction.

It is, however, precisely to the notions of action and interaction that we now wish to draw attention. They are notions which have been regarded with suspicion as not being completely scientific. Yet they do appear to provide illuminating explanations of a kind which functionalism cannot do. Can they then be used in a scientific way? Our problem is not unlike that of Marx in the 'Theses on Feuerbach', where he wrote:—

'The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism . . . is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradiction to materialism, was developed by idealism, but only abstractly, since of course idealism does not know sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really differentiated from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity.'¹

Functionalism, like the materialism which Marx was attacking, tries to exclude subjectively formulated models of action. On the other hand, too often, those who do consider society subjectively, adopt a merely intuitive approach and fail to demonstrate their explanations empirically. Can we not include the subjectively formulated notion of action in our sociological theory and yet demonstrate what we say about action and interaction objectively and empirically? This must be our aim in the ensuing chapters. We need not, by any means, accept the metaphysical implications of Marx' first thesis in doing so, but Marx has achieved an important insight here, and we shall have occasion to return to it when we develop the notion of systems of interaction to take account of social change.

¹ Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach' in Marx and Engels. *On Religion* (1955), p. 69.

~~Reading 8~~
READING - 5

VIII

CONFLICT AND THE ANALYSIS OF CLASS

CLASS AND STATUS

IN the last chapter it was inevitable that we should become concerned with the problem of social classes. For in one of its usages the term 'class' has been defined very largely in terms of conflict situations of a disruptive type. But it will be instructive now to approach the problem from the other side, starting with the problems which have arisen in the actual empirical study of class, in order to see how far these problems are understandable in terms of the theoretical models we have been discussing.

The most striking fact about studies of 'social class' in contemporary sociology has been the confusion of two analytically distinct conceptions, on the one hand the concept of class as used by Marx, and on the other the concept used by Lloyd Warner and others to refer to hierarchical status groupings in small communities. So, for instance, one sometimes hears sociologists speaking of Warner refuting Marx, and, on the other hand, Marxists have often tended to regard acceptance of Warner's conclusions as a central sociological heresy. By contrast, for some at least of the great European sociologists, there was no question of these two concepts being confused. Weber and Tönnies, especially, distinguished clearly between them, and any theoretical approach to the problem of class can do no better than to go back to the distinctions which they draw.¹

It must be pointed out at once, however, that the two concepts

¹ See Bendix and Lipset, *Class, Status and Power* (1954), pp. 49-74.

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are only analytically distinct. This can be seen in two ways. On the one hand when we consider what those whom we observe, the actors in the social system, mean by class, it becomes obvious that they do not distinguish between the two conceptions. For them the word class is used to describe complex situations involving both economic classes and status classes. On the other hand when the two analytic conceptions are developed further it becomes clear that the particular line of development of an economic-class situation is bound to be affected by the sort of status situation which exists within the social system as a whole and vice versa. What we have to do now is to look at the models implied by each of these concepts in turn and seek to understand the way in which class and status systems intersect in actual social situations.

THE CONCEPT OF CLASS AS A CONFLICT GROUP

What Marx's model of class-conflict suggests is a particular sub-type of the conflict situation which we have discussed. His particular area of interest is in those basic conflict situations which arise because of the differential relations which various sets of actors have to the means of production. The essence of his 'materialism' (which is not a necessary implication of anything which has been said in the previous chapter) lies in his assertion that this sub-type is the crucial form of conflict around which the social system must develop in any society. Moreover Marx is interested in the special case in which the social relations of production produces a labour-market in which the owners of the means of production buy the labour of the non-owners.

Weber's conception of economic classes is somewhat wider in scope. It includes not merely those cases in which conflict and bargaining arise from differential relations to the means of production, but all cases in which there is a market situation. Thus he says,

[In our terminology 'classes' are not communities; they merely represent possible and frequent bases for communal action. We may speak of class when (1) a number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life chances insofar as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interest in the possession of goods and opportunities for income and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets.

[These points refer to 'class situation' which we may express more briefly as the typical chance for a supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experiences, insofar as this chance is determined by the kind and the amount of power, or lack of such, to dispose of goods or skills for income in a given economic order. The term class refers to any group of people that is found in the same class situation].¹

Weber then goes on to specify some of the important bases of class formation in human history.

'Property' and 'lack of property' are the basic categories of all class situations . . .

Within these categories, however, class situations are further differentiated: on the one hand, according to the kind of property which is useable for returns: and, on the other hand, according to the kind of services that can be offered on the market. Ownership of domestic buildings; productive establishments; warehouses, stores, agriculturally useable land; large and small holdings—quantitative differences with possible qualitative consequences—; ownership of mines, cattle; men (slaves); disposition over mobile instruments of production, or capital goods of all sorts, especially money or objects that can be exchanged for money easily and at any time; disposition over products of one's own labour or of other's labour differing according to their various distances from consumability; disposition over transferable monopolies of any kind—all these distinctions differentiate the class situations of the propertied, just as does the meaning that they can and do give to the utilization of their property, especially to property which has monetary equivalence.²

There are three points at which Weber's definitions of 'class' and 'class situation' differentiate his approach from that of Marx. These are:— (1) that he includes situations other than those arising from differential relationship to the means of production (e.g. ownership of domestic buildings) (2) that in the case of the latter he recognizes a greater variety of relationships to the means of production (e.g. he says that they may be differentiated according to the kind of services offered, and later distinguishes between small and large landownership. For Marx landowners and wage-earners constitute single groups); and (3) that people's class situations differ according to 'the meaning that they can and do give to the utilization of their property'.

¹ Bendix and Lipset, *Op. cit.*, p. 64. ² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

The second and third of these points are of most importance in relation to the argument of the present chapter. The second raises the question 'Why should there be differences in the "life-chances" of the different sub-groups amongst those who own and those who do not own the means of production?' The third leads us to ask what Weber means by 'the meaning that they give to the utilization of their property'. We shall have to consider what the relationship is between this meaning and what we have variously called the aims, aspirations and interests of groups.

These questions are of considerable importance in the analysis of the class structure of contemporary societies. One central question for example in the sociology of class to-day is whether the so-called middle-classes are really to be regarded as a class. Do they really have different 'life-chances' or is their belief that they do merely a case of 'false consciousness'? Here the second point leads naturally to a consideration of the third, for the possibility of the middle-classes becoming separated from the proletariat seems to depend in part at least on the 'meaning' which they give to their situation. The Marxist notion of 'false consciousness' has often led to the view that the difference between a middle-class and a proletarian class situation is 'merely' a subjective one, and therefore not important because a valid theory of class should be based on 'objective' factors.

Marx himself was by no means unaware of these problems even though he failed to treat them at any length. He was approaching a statement of the central questions in the last few pages of Volume III of *Capital*, when he writes,

What constitutes wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords as three great classes?

At first glance it might seem that the identity of revenues and of sources of revenue is responsible. The classes are three great social groups whose components, the individual members, live from wages, profit and rent respectively, that is from the utilization of their labour power, capital and landed property.

However from this point of view doctors and officials would also form distinct classes. for they belong to different social groups and the revenue of the members of each group come from the same source. The same would be true of the infinite distinction of interest.

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and position which the social division of labour creates among workers, as among capitalists and landowners.¹

It is clear that Marx does not believe that true class differentiation proceeds as far as this. Although the bases of class-formation appear to be there, classes, as such, do not emerge. Indeed, even in the case of the working-class, class formation is by no means the automatic consequence of position in relation to the means of production or in the labour market. Thus differences in the relationship of groups to the means of production may be a necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition for class formation.

According to Marx the final factor necessary for the emergence of a true class is its participation in a 'political struggle'. Thus he makes a distinction in Hegelian terms between a 'class-in-itself' and a 'class-for-itself'. The former term refers to a group with a common class-situation only, and the latter to a group which is organized for conflict. He makes the point in *The Poverty of Philosophy* when he says,

Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of the people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class. Thus the mass is already a class in relation to capital, but not yet a class-for-itself. In the struggle, of which we have only indicated a few phases, this mass unites and forms itself into a class-for-itself. The interests which it defends become class interests. But the struggle between classes is a political struggle.²

This passage is readily understandable in terms of the discussion of the last chapter. There we saw in trying to construct an adequate model of conflict-group formation that the category of the ends of group action had to be understood in two stages. First there was the fact of a number of separate individuals finding themselves in similar conflict situations and thus developing like interests. But this resulted in the formation of a group whose object was not directly the pursuit of these interests, but rather the mobilization of power to strengthen the numbers of the group in their 'struggle' or bargaining. The sociological explanation of the behaviour of the members was

¹ Marx, *Capital* (1909), Vol. III, pp. 1031-1032. See Coser and Rosenberg, *Sociological Theory*, p. 369.

² Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1910). See Bottomore and Rubel, *Karl Marx, Selected Sociological Writings* (1956), p. 187.

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then seen to lie in relating this behaviour not to the like-interests of the members, but to the group's aims or interests. There is no great difference between this position and that outlined by Marx in the above passage, except that we should prefer for the sake of clarity to speak of like rather than common interests before the group was formed.

But there is an extremely important point here and one which will help us to see the relationship between Marx's theory and theories such as that of Weber. The determining factor for Marx is not that of the original like interests of the class-members. It is the situation of 'political struggle'. Is there not a link here between this feature of Marx's theory and Weber's distinction between 'property' and 'lack of property' as the basic categories of all class situations and differentiations according to the meaning which people in a common class situation give to the utilization of their property.

Marxists, on the whole, are very suspicious of any attempt to extend Marx's meaning here. They would distinguish between the real aims of the class in a situation of political struggle and purely ideological aims which represent a false consciousness. In particular they would insist that the 'middle-classes' do not have really different class aims to those of the proletariat, however many false meanings they might give to their situation.

Now one factor in Marxist theory which pushes it towards this position is that it tends towards a type of positivism, in the sense in which that term was used in Chapter Six. It is inherently suspicious of the introduction of normative factors into its theory of action. This is one of the implications of Marx's 'materialism'. In reacting against Hegelian idealism and 'standing the dialectic on its head', he was bound to emphasise precisely the factors which idealism neglects, factors such as material needs and interests.

Yet Marx was no crude materialist as is shown by his first thesis on Feuerbach and by the quotation which we have made from *The Poverty of Philosophy*. He does recognize that new aims are introduced into a situation when individuals not only pursue their like interests but also engage in 'political struggle'. It would therefore be entirely consistent with Marxist theory for us to look very closely at the possible class situations and at the development of class aims in the course of political struggle.

The crucial case here is that of the so-called middle-class. There do appear to be good reasons for suggesting that its class-situation differs from that of the proletariat, at least in the case of some middle class groups. This is particularly true with regard to managerial groups.

Weber has sometimes been accused of being blind to the fact of the class struggle in his analysis of capitalist social structure. To some extent, perhaps, this is true. But it is sometimes overlooked that in his study of bureaucracies he made a peculiarly penetrating analysis of the relationship between one large group of roles and the means of production. This analysis is highly relevant to the question of whether the middle-classes are really a separate class.

One surprising feature of this analysis, when one looks at it in detail, is the number of similarities between the situation of the bureaucrat, as he describes it, and the situation of the proletariat as it is described by Marx. Like the proletariat the bureaucrat has no property rights in the facilities which are essential for his work. Like the proletariat he is dependent upon his remuneration for his livelihood. And like the proletariat his working-life and interests have to be completely separated from his home. Where then lies the difference?

The crucial differentiating fact is that the bureaucrat believes that he has a career for life whereas the proletariat may be discharged at very short notice. To put this in epigrammatic form we may say that the proletariat sells his labour by the week, whereas the bureaucrat sells it by the life. The question, however, is whether this distinction is a valid one. Is the bureaucrat under an illusion here which may be shattered at any time by a letter from his superior officer telling him that his services are no longer required? If he is, then his apparent class-position may indeed be merely a product of false consciousness which he may expect to be swept away as the 'real' factors of the situation become operative.

What we should say, using the terminology of earlier chapters, is that his 'expectations' are relevant to the description of his class-position. The social structure may be defined in terms of these expectations in either of two sets of circumstances. Either they are valid expectations in the sense that 'alter' (in this case, his employer) recognizes them as binding, or they are valid in the sense that he can force his employer to accept them. So far

as higher level bureaucrats are concerned the first alternative holds. So far as lower level bureaucrats, and indeed some workers, are concerned the second might be the case, although the instances of trade-unions successfully winning more than a few additional weeks' notice for their members are few and far between.

The point to notice, however, is that when a group of individuals has *valid* expectations about its situation these expectations cannot be discussed as merely subjective. There appears to be good reason for holding, therefore, that there is a considerable number of managers and bureaucrats in any advanced industrial society, who, although they would appear only as deluded proletarians according to rigid Marxist definitions, do actually have a distinct class situation. Similarly it could be shown that the specialist workers of modern industry whose knowledge is both scarce and indispensable enjoy a greater measure of security than, and have a different class situation from the proletariat.

This does not necessarily mean that the middle-class will become a separate class-for-itself in Marx's sense. By definition they would only do so if they became caught up in a 'political struggle' or as we should say in a conflict situation. Insofar, however, as their expectations of a career or of permanent security are fulfilled they face no such conflict, at least with their employers. For them the social arrangements which their employers suggest are entirely legitimate. For such people the only way in which they are likely to become involved in a class struggle is on the side of their employers, the aims of whose social system they accept as binding on themselves.

Of course this does not exclude the emergence of middle-class conflict groups in other contexts. One factor which may be important is one to which Weber refers in his list of factors producing different class-situations, namely, 'the ownership of domestic buildings'. Certainly the distinction between those who pay rent, those to whom it is paid, and those who own their own houses either outright or through mortgages, is an important factor in local politics. But this is to widen the basis of the discussion.

More important to our consideration of Marxist theory is the fact that there are many lower-level bureaucrats, skilled workers and clerks whose situation appears marginal between

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that of the proletariat and the contented middle-class. Such groups, as Lockwood has shown in his perceptive study of clerical workers,¹ are in a continual dilemma. Should they rely upon the paternalistic benevolence of their employers, or should they put their faith in trades unions? This dilemma is of crucial importance to the theory of class.

It is at this point that our observations in the previous chapter become relevant. There we saw that in a ruling class situation the ruling class would be continually trying to ensure its own position by trying to convince members of other classes that its position was 'legitimate'. Equally the leaders of the subject class will seek to deny this claim to legitimacy. Naturally, then, their appeal will be directed to the marginal groups which we are discussing, and the actual position of these groups in the social structure will depend upon which interpretation of their situation they accept.

This would appear to involve a fairly considerable revision of the Marxist model of class conflict as it is normally understood. Yet it is one which must be accepted unless it is possible to argue with Marx that the economic development of capitalism *must* involve 'the increasing misery' of the proletariat. But until this increasing misery is actually experienced it is irrelevant to the problem of class formation.

THE CONCEPT OF STATUS

So far we have focused our attention fairly narrowly on conflicts arising out of economic or market situations, on the assumption that such conflicts are of strategic importance in the structure of modern societies. Even in this sphere we have found that the notion of 'legitimacy' and of its denial is important to the understanding of the way in which conflicts develop. We must now turn to a sphere in which this notion is even more important, namely, that of status systems. We shall suggest that such systems can only be adequately understood in terms of claims to legitimate authority and their rejection by some members of society.

Once again it is as well to begin with Weber's definition of a status situation which is as follows:— 'In contrast to the purely economically determined "class situation" we wish to designate

¹ Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker* (1958).

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as "status situation" every typical component of the life of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honour. This honour may be connected with any quality shared by a plurality."¹

Now it would seem at first sight that the differential apportionment of honour or esteem would be an obvious feature of any society or grouping, and this need have no necessary relation to a system of economic classes. One would expect that winning such esteem would be one of the rewards or sanctions which would encourage the performance of roles and so reinforce the social structure. But the generalized conception of a status system implies something more than and something different from this. It implies not merely the apportionment of esteem for some specific role performance but the apportionment of a generalized esteem which serves to segregate one group from another and to facilitate the development of different ways of life.

The questions which are raised therefore by the existence of status systems are three. (1) What are the characteristics whose possession leads to the possessor enjoying high or low esteem? (2) How is the tendency to assign esteem in this way to be explained? and (3) Who accords the esteem?

Different qualities will, if they are chosen as the criteria for the assignment of esteem, produce systems of different types. Thus, ancestry, which forms a component element of status evaluations in most systems, naturally tends to produce a closed system with little social mobility, best exemplified by the case of the Indian caste system. If the possession of money is the crucial factor, a greater measure of mobility may be possible, and if education is decisive, there may be, provided that there is equality of educational opportunity, the highest degree of mobility of all.

But one important factor regarding the differential distribution of esteem according to the possession of valued characteristics should not be overlooked. This is that very often it is not the possession of the crucial qualities themselves which are important, but the symbols of their possession. Thus what seems to matter in most status systems is not so much the possession of a quality such as those mentioned above which matters as the living of a certain 'style of life'. Partly this style

¹ Bendix and Lipset, *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

of life is merely the consequence of the social isolation brought about by the status system. Partly it is the consequence of attempts by the incumbents of high status, albeit unconscious, to restrict entry to their group.

The fact that, once status groupings exist, differences between them tend to multiply seems to make it difficult in most cases to say what the determining factor is. There is, for example, the well-known problem of the down-at-heel aristocrat. Originally, may be, the high esteem which his ancestor enjoyed depended upon his role as a landed proprietor fulfilling an important social function. But his ancestors developed a style of life which he retains even though he has been stripped of his functions, and it is this style of life which leads him to enjoy a higher degree of esteem than people who have taken over his functions.

Thus the question 'what are the determining characteristics of a status group?' appears to yield no clear answer. And it is a question which had led to much fruitless and confusing debate especially when what has been sought has been thought to be not the criterion of status assignment, but, more generally, of something called 'class'. All that we can say is that many societies are characterized by the existence of communal groupings each with its own way of life, which are thought by the population to be hierarchically arranged in some order of esteem.

But this leads us to the second question of why esteem is assigned to ways of life in this way. Few sociologists have been prepared to accept that it is quite arbitrarily assigned, but it would seem that the explanation most often put forward is a peculiarly implausible one. It is a version of the general functionalist theory, which has been applied to the analysis of status systems by Davis and Moore. As they put it,

If the rights and perquisites of different positions in a society must be unequal, then the society must be stratified, because that is what stratifications means. Social inequality is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies insure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons. Hence every society, no matter how simple or complex, must differentiate persons both in terms of prestige and esteem and must therefore possess a certain amount of institutionalized inequality.¹

¹ Davis and Moore, 'Some principles of Stratification', in Coser and Rosenberg, *Op. cit.*, pp. 408-419.

But how far is it true that the 'most important positions' are those which receive the greatest esteem? What standard of importance is to be applied? From whose point of view are the positions most important? *Prima facie* it does not seem to be the case that positions of the greatest *utilitarian* importance receive the greatest esteem. On the contrary the usual case seems to be that in which the most esteemed positions are those of symbolic or even only decorative character. Of course it could be argued that they must be the most important, despite appearances, *because* they enjoy high esteem. But this is to beg the question. One is reminded of Malinowski arguing that the survival of the hansom cab is to be explained functionally by the fact that it ministers to our 'retrospective sentiments'. Once it is assumed that everything has a function, a function must be found or invented for everything. Similarly once it is assumed that the positions of greatest importance enjoy the greatest esteem some account of the importance of positions enjoying great esteem will be put forward.

In fact the only variant of the functionalist view which in any way seems plausible is that which holds that esteem is accorded to those positions which were *historically* of importance. This would certainly be a more convincing explanation of such facts as the high esteem enjoyed by the British aristocracy or the old families of Warner's Yankee city. Even here, however, there are two important objections which may be made. The first is that in these cases the prestige of the positions might simply derive from their age rather than their importance. The other is that such groups do not enjoy universal esteem. They are very often derided or resented by the other status-groups.

This brings us to the third and more important question, namely, 'When it is said that esteem is accorded to positions of greater importance, by whom is it accorded?' The answer which is often assumed here appears to be 'It is accorded by common consent', and one can in theory imagine a state of affairs in which everyone did agree on what characteristics and what style of life merited esteem. But once again this pure type appears to have little relevance to our actual experience of status systems. It is an obvious fact of our experience that where birth is claimed as a criterion of status it is challenged by those who would wish to replace it by money, education, occupation or social function. And each of these would be challenged by all

the others. Even occupation, which, it had been thought for some time, provided an agreed criterion, gives rise to conflicting valuations. This has been clearly shown in a recent article by Turner.¹ Turner showed that where people were asked to place occupations in terms of merited prestige rather than in terms of status rank-order (the question here always involved asking people what they thought other people thought), different occupational groups as respondents showed considerable conflict in their evaluation of the different occupations.

Clearly the best that can be said is that the case in which there is unanimity on status valuations is a limiting one rarely, if ever, found empirically. The usual case is that in which there is considerable conflict as to what the criterion of status should be. In a sense one might say that each of the groups was proposing its own alternative criteria and fighting to get them universally accepted. Thus it would be true to say that a conflict of status-ideologies is an essential part of all status-class relations. This ideological conflict, however, might be of an even more fundamental kind, because what some groups propose is not merely a different criterion for status assignment, but the rejection of the very notion of status itself.

LLOYD WARNER'S ACCOUNT OF THE YANKEE CITY STATUS SYSTEM

Indeed what are described by the students of status-hierarchies look very little like the pure type of status groups which we have been considering. It will be useful, therefore, to look a little more closely at one outstanding study in this field, that of Lloyd Warner and his associates,² and ask whether there is not some more adequate theoretical model available to explain the facts which he describes. What we shall suggest is that (1) the notion of a status hierarchy is something which is deeply entrenched in the ideology of the ruling classes (in the sense of conflict classes) as a means of gaining recognition for the legitimacy of their position; (2) this ruling class will attempt to get the status ideology accepted by other classes and (3) that these other classes do not all accept it, but put forward counter ideologies of their own. To explain this we must refer to Warner's

¹ Turner, 'Life Situation and Sub-culture'. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. IX, No. 4, December 1958, p. 299.

² Warner and Lunt, *The Social System of a Modern Community*.

account of the behaviour of his six classes in Yankee City. The following is a summary of some of the more important things which he says about them.

1. *The Upper-Upper (U.U.) Class*. The members of this class have wealth inherited through several generations. The original source of this wealth is not shoe manufacture, the currently most productive source, but ship-building which was the most important source in its day. The U.U. class has its own neighbourhoods, cliques and associations, as well as participating in associations through which it can exercise authority over other classes.
2. *The Lower-Upper (L.U.) Class*. The members of this class consist of the factory owners and their friends. They are the new rich and their behaviour is characterized by conspicuous consumption. They have their own neighbourhoods, cliques and associations as well as associations through which they exercise influence downwards, but above all they seek closer association with the U.U. class and seek to convert their wealth into the outward symbolism of U.U. status. As a defence against this intrusion, the U.U. group makes ever more exquisite distinctions of behaviour through which it seeks to preserve its own identity.
3. *The Upper-Middle (U.M.) Class*. This class consists of substantial business men, managers and professional people. They spend much less time in conspicuous consumption and play a leading part in civic activities.
4. *The Lower-Middle (L.M.) Class*. This class consists of small-scale business men, white-collar groups and some skilled workers. They are not very wealthy but place great emphasis upon the virtues of cleanliness, sobriety and respectability. It is in this class that the notion of 'keeping up with the Jones's' is most applicable.
5. *The Upper-Lower (U.L.) Class*. This class consists of the bulk of the manual workers, or as one of Warner's informants calls them 'the clean poor'. They tend to belong to trade unions, lodges and friendly societies, and to reject the notion of paternalistic management in favour of trade unionism and collective bargaining. They feel a special contempt for the behaviour of the L.U. class.

6. *The Lower-Lower (L.L.) Class.* This group consists of the demoralized poor, who are very often unemployed and dependent for their livelihood on social security payments. They are resentful and contemptuous of all other classes and philosophies about the superiority of their own relatively undisciplined way of life.

THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LLOYD WARNER'S CLASSES
THE L.U.'S CLAIM TO LEGITIMACY

Now whatever else may be said it is clear that there is no consensus of status valuations here. At every point, even at the point of contact between U.U. and L.U. there is conflict about who is entitled to the greatest esteem and who should be allowed to move from group to group.

For a deeper understanding of this system it is necessary to begin by looking at the motivation and behaviour of the L.U. class, which is crucial to the system as a whole. They clearly do accept the idea of some sort of status order and spend their lives attempting to break into the one class which they recognize as being higher in the hierarchy than their own. Why do they do this and what do they gain by it?

The behaviour of the L.U. class is readily explained if we look at the *economic* position in which they find themselves. They find themselves, because of their position as factory owners, in a position of supreme power in the community. But they do not have legitimate authority. The lower order continually compare them unfavourably with the ruling classes of the past. Hence they must, if they are to gain acceptance, abolish the distinctions between themselves and this class. At the same time they need the U.U. class and its way of life, because without it there would be no way at all of legitimating their positions. On the other hand they have to keep the lower orders in their place, and the idea of an overall status hierarchy, rationalized on the lines suggested by Davis and Moore, provides them with the necessary ideology. Thus the idea of a status system is not something which emerges, as it were, from the general will. It is an L.U. idea, which fits in well with the L.U.'s need to maintain its own power.

The U.U. class has its own reasons for approving of the system which the L.U.'s seek to introduce. It should not be

thought that the esteem which this class currently enjoys is something which has existed from time immemorial. They were 'new rich' in their day, and it was only when they were replaced by even less charming successors that they began to win popular approval. Now, however, they find the working-classes and the new new-rich conspiring to elevate their status. Naturally they will do everything they can to encourage them. They may resent the L.U.'s trying to gate-crash their tea-parties, but without the situation which the L.U.'s have produced, the tea-parties would have little excitement.

The U.M. class also has reasons of its own for accepting the status hierarchy. Their ambitions are limited in any case, but they can achieve them far more readily in the setting which the L.U.'s have created. They have a delegated authority and not inconsiderable perquisites to reward them for accepting the system. Moreover, in the immediate context of community life they do win approval for their social usefulness.

The behaviour of the L.M. and L.L. classes are both best understood in terms of Merton's analysis of *Social Structure and Anomie*.¹ According to this analysis the American ethos makes impossible demands on the majority of the population and there are various ways of adapting to them without full compliance. In this case the characteristic behaviour of the L.M. and L.L. classes can be understood as an adaptation to the impossible demands made by the status systems.

The impossibility of the demands of the American ethos, according to Merton, derives from the fact that it not only insists that successful goal achievement is necessary, but that it also insists that certain means and these means only may be used in the process. Not all can fulfil these demands and hence there are groups which give up the goal of success, groups which introduce illegitimate means, and groups which abandon both the goal and the means. The two forms of adaptation which are relevant here are the first and the third, which Merton calls Ritualism and Retreatism.

The Ritualist says 'I may not have got to the top, but at least I have stuck to the rules', and implies 'Not like some people I could name!' He will not 'stick his neck out', but likes to be able to point to the rule-book to prove that he has played fair. These are exactly the characteristics of L.M. behaviour.

¹ Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Chapter IV.

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'Keeping up with the Jones's' does not imply getting ahead of the Jones's. Such an ambition has been given up long ago. The L.M. class is not motivated for out-and-out status striving. All it wants is to be able to prove its respectability.

By contrast with the ritualists who say 'I am poor, but I was honest', the retreatists say 'I may be poor and unsuccessful, but I am free'. Here we find our L.L. philosophers with their contempt for the goals, the ways of life, and the institutionalized means of the status-mad world. Their reaction to the proposal for regarding the world as a status-hierarchy is to retreat from it altogether.

But what of the class which we have left out, the U.L.'s? What is their attitude to the idea of a status hierarchy? It is surely that they, too, have rejected the idea of status-striving, but that they have put in its place a demand for security and respect, where they are, and as of right. Parsons sees this when he says,

In the lower reaches of the structure there are tendencies to deviation from the middle-class pattern . . . Essentially we might say that this consists in a shift from the predominance of the success goal to that of the security goal. More concretely it is a loss of interest in achievement, whether for its own sake and for the opportunity to do more important things, or for the advancement of family status through more income or increased reputation. Occupational role then becomes not the main field for achievement, but a means of securing the necessities of a tolerable standard of living, a necessary evil.¹

Taken, all in all, it seems that in the case of the three lower classes at least, status-striving in its pure form does not exist. The picture of Yankee City which Warner draws is not one which can be comprehended in terms of the pure type of status model. Is there a model which can explain it?

In fact it seems that the sort of situation which Warner describes is one which is readily explained in terms of the conflict model outlined in our previous chapter if it is spelled out in more detail to take account of the notions of class and status which we have discussed here.

The basic fact is that this is a case of the ruling-class situation which is one of the possibilities arising out of social conflict.

¹ Parsons, 'Revised Analytic Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification', in Bendix and Lipset, *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

CONFLICT AND THE ANALYSIS OF CLASS

In this case the L.U. class is the ruling class. One would expect such a class, in terms of our model to seek some means of legitimating its position. In this case the means which it uses is that of offering an interpretation of the existing distribution of power and privileges in terms of a status system.

The notion of a status system is one which is fairly readily acceptable, because, in any group with a specific purpose, our experience as participants is that we do esteem most highly those people who fulfil roles which are manifestly useful in relation to the group's purpose. What the status ideology does is to extend this notion in two directions. On the one hand it applies it not to a group with a specific purpose, but to a total community and, on the other, it applies it to a situation in which there is a ruling class whose interests may conflict with those of the classes whom they rule, and whose position rests in the first place on the power, rather than the authority, which they exercise.

As we pointed out in our previous chapter, however, the ruling class is not always successful in getting its interpretations of society and its claim to legitimacy accepted. Counter-ideologies which deny this claim tend to be put forward by the leaders of the lower classes. The main case on which we dwelt in our original analysis was that in which the ideology was one which pointed a conflict of interests and emphasized the balance of power element in the inter-class situations. This would explain the typical attitudes and behaviour of Warner's U.L. class. The behaviour of the L.M. and L.L. classes suggests other ways in which a class may interpret its behaviour, once it denies the legitimacy of the order proposed by its rulers. Both involve forms of accommodation to the system of power prevailing without involving positive motivation to accept it in its entirety.

THE ANALYSIS OF CLASS CONFLICT IN RELATION TO GENERAL SOCIOLOGY

Now what we have shown in this chapter is of some importance in relation to the whole question of the general approach which sociologists should make to research problems. The empiricist approaches the subject of class with a demand for a simple clear operational definition of the phenomena to be studied. In

Durkheim's words he wants to be told 'the empirical characteristics of the thing designated'. Thus class is defined either in terms of some simple objective characteristic such as income, education, etc., or in the case of the more sophisticated empiricists in terms of the subjective attitudes of people towards class. Thereafter they feel that enough has been done to define class and go on to discuss such problems as the extent of mobility from one class to another.

What we have shown here is that in two separate areas of study, one the study of economic classes and the other the study of status classes, their definitions are inadequate and misleading. In the first case we saw that the notion of classes being formed on the basis of the relation of individuals and groups to the means of production was much more complex and allowed for a far greater variety of classes than the cruder forms of Marxism would lead us to expect. In the second case we found that the actual attitudes operative amongst people thought to be living in a hierarchial status system involved great tensions and conflict within that system. Nonetheless, the groupings which are formed as a result of the interests and attitudes which we have discussed are explicable in terms of a single general theory of conflict. If we understood this theory better we should approach research into social class with much more adequate though complex definitions of what the classes are, and we should not be in danger of producing studies which, although statistically exact, were irrelevant to the problem of class structure.

It should not be thought that this is meant as a criticism of mobility studies as such. Far from this being the case, once we had a picture of the conflict, power, and status relations holding between the classes, any changes in the extent of mobility would be very relevant evidence as to the nature of the class system. Obviously it matters greatly to a system if parents expect their children to move into a different class, and if the existing members of a class are continually having to accept new recruits from other classes to membership. But it also matters that this transition process involves taking over or failing to take over complex patterns of motivation appropriate to the new class situation.

It is also of prime importance in predicting the behaviour of social classes to understand the complexity of their members' motivation. Someone has recently said half-humourously that

the British working class not merely believes in the class struggle, but in the necessity of its everlasting continuance. This is just one of many class attitudes which is readily explained in terms of the sort of conflict model advocated in this book. The problem is a far more complicated one than can be dealt with by a simple reference to the statistics of occupational distribution. In fact studies of this kind usually make large tacit assumptions about the relations between classes, which if they were made explicit would not stand up to examination.

In fact what this chapter shows very clearly is that in this, one of the central questions studied in empirical sociology, there is a complex interrelationship between variable elements and that, hence, the problems in the field can only really be stated by someone with an adequate theoretical orientation to the subject. This, of course, has been a major theme of the argument throughout this book.

But this leads on to our final problem. Empiricist sociology has the undoubted advantage that, though irrelevant and lacking in significance, its conclusions are readily verifiable. Our problem is to show whether the complex theoretical models which we have been elaborating can be subjected to any empirical test. Theory is important and indeed essential to science. But without the possibility of empirical verification it remains sheer speculation. We must now ask the question 'How "scientific" can sociology be?'

Michel Foucault

POWER/KNOWLEDGE

[...]

I WOULD SAY, THEN, that what has emerged in the course of the last ten or fifteen years is a sense of the increasing vulnerability to criticism of things, institutions, practices, discourses. A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence – even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and to our everyday behaviour. But together with this sense of instability and this amazing efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local criticism, one in fact also discovers something that perhaps was not initially foreseen, something one might describe as precisely the inhibiting effect of global, *totalitarian theories*. It is not that these global theories have not provided nor continue to provide in a fairly consistent fashion useful tools for local research: Marxism and psychoanalysis are proofs of this. But I believe these tools have only been provided on the condition that the theoretical unity of these discourses was in some sense put in abeyance, or at least curtailed, divided, overthrown, caricatured, theatricalised, or what you will. In each case, the attempt to think in terms of a totality has in fact proved a hindrance to research.

So, the main point to be gleaned from these events of the last fifteen years, their predominant feature, is the *local* character of criticism. That should not, I believe, be taken to mean that its qualities are those of an obtuse, naïve or primitive empiricism; nor is it a soggy eclecticism, an opportunism that laps up any and every kind of theoretical approach; nor does it mean a self-imposed ascetism which taken by itself would reduce to the worst kind of theoretical impoverishment: I believe that what this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established régimes of thought.

It is here that we touch upon another feature of these events that has been manifest for some time now: it seems to me that this local criticism has proceeded by means of what one might term 'a return of knowledge'. What I mean by that phrase is this: it is a fact that we have repeatedly encountered, at least at a superficial level, in the course of most recent times, an entire thematic to the effect that it is not theory but life that matters, not knowledge but reality, not books but money etc.; but it also seems to me that over and above, and arising out of this thematic, there is something else to which we are witness, and which we might describe as an *insurrection of subjugated knowledges*.

By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation. Concretely, it is not a semiology of the life of the asylum, it is not even a sociology of delinquency, that has made it possible to produce an effective criticism of the asylum and likewise of the prison, but rather the immediate emergence of historical contents. And this is simply because only the historical contents allow us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systematising thought is designed to mask. Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism – which obviously draws upon scholarship – has been able to reveal.

On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. I also believe that it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges (such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the nurse, of the doctor – parallel and marginal as they are to the knowledge of medicine – that of the delinquent etc.), and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge (*le savoir des gens*) though it is far from being a general commonsense knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it – that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work.

However, there is a strange kind of paradox in the desire to assign to this same category of subjugated knowledges what are on the one hand the products of meticulous, erudite, exact historical knowledge, and on the other hand local and specific knowledges which have no common meaning and which are in some fashion allowed to fall into disuse whenever they are not effectively and explicitly maintained in themselves. Well, it seems to me that our critical discourses of the last fifteen years have in effect discovered their essential force in this association between the buried knowledges of erudition and those disqualified from the hierarchy of knowledges and sciences.

In the two cases – in the case of the erudite as in that of the disqualified knowledges – with what in fact were these buried, subjugated knowledges really

concerned? They were concerned with a *historical knowledge of struggles*. In the specialised areas of erudition as in the disqualified popular knowledge there lay the memory of hostile encounters which even up to this day have been confined to the margins of knowledge.

What emerges out of this is something one might call a genealogy, or rather a multiplicity of genealogical researches, a painstaking rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflicts. And these genealogies, that are the combined product of an erudite knowledge and a popular knowledge, were not possible and could not even have been attempted except on one condition, namely that the tyranny of globalising discourses with their hierarchy and all their privileges of a theoretical *avant-garde* was eliminated.

Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today. This then will be a provisional definition of the genealogies which I have attempted to compile with you over the last few years.

You are well aware that this research activity, which one can thus call genealogical, has nothing at all to do with an opposition between the abstract unity of theory and the concrete multiplicity of facts. It has nothing at all to do with a disqualification of the speculative dimension which opposes to it, in the name of some kind of scientism, the rigour of well established knowledges. It is not therefore via an empiricism that the genealogical project unfolds, nor even via a positivism in the ordinary sense of that term. What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects. Genealogies are therefore not positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form of science. They are precisely anti-sciences. Not that they vindicate a lyrical right to ignorance or non-knowledge: it is not that they are concerned to deny knowledge or that they esteem the virtues of direct cognition and base their practice upon an immediate experience that escapes encapsulation in knowledge. It is not that with which we are concerned. We are concerned, rather, with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse within a society such as ours. Nor does it basically matter all that much that this institutionalisation of scientific discourse is embodied in a university, or, more generally, in an educational apparatus, in a theoretical-commercial institution such as psychoanalysis or within the framework of reference that is provided by a political system such as Marxism; for it is really against the effects of the power of a discourse that is considered to be scientific that the genealogy must wage its struggle.

To be more precise, I would remind you how numerous have been those who for many years now, probably for more than half a century, have questioned whether Marxism was, or was not, a science. One might say that the same issue has been posed, and continues to be posed, in the case of psychoanalysis, or even worse, in that of the semiology of literary texts. But to all these demands of: 'Is it or is it

not a science?', the genealogies or the genealogists would reply: 'If you really want to know, the fault lies in your very determination to make a science out of Marxism or psychoanalysis or this or that study'. If we have any objection against Marxism, it lies in the fact that it could effectively be a science. In more detailed terms, I would say that even before we can know the extent to which something such as Marxism or psychoanalysis can be compared to a scientific practice in its everyday functioning, its rules of construction, its working concepts, that even before we can pose the question of a formal and structural analogy between Marxist or psychoanalytic discourse, it is surely necessary to question ourselves about our aspirations to the kind of power that is presumed to accompany such a science. It is surely the following kinds of question that would need to be posed: What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: 'Is it a science? Which speaking, discoursing subjects – which subjects of experience and knowledge – do you then want to 'diminish' when you say: 'I who conduct this discourse am conducting a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist'? Which theoretical-political *avant garde* do you want to enthrone in order to isolate it from all the discontinuous forms of knowledge that circulate about it? When I see you straining to establish the scientificity of Marxism I do not really think that you are demonstrating once and for all that Marxism has a rational structure and that therefore its propositions are the outcome of verifiable procedures; for me you are doing something altogether different, you are investing Marxist discourses and those who uphold them with the effects of a power which the West since Medieval times has attributed to science and has reserved for those engaged in scientific discourse.

By comparison, then, and in contrast to the various projects which aim to inscribe knowledges in the hierarchical order of power associated with science, a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from that subjection, to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. It is based on a reactivation of local knowledges – of minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them – in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power: this, then, is the project of these disordered and fragmentary genealogies. If we were to characterise it in two terms, then 'archaeology' would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and 'genealogy' would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play. [. . .]

The course of study that I have been following until now – roughly since 1970/71 – has been concerned with the *how* of power. [. . .] [I]n the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have the production of an important phenomenon, the emergence, or rather the invention, of a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques, completely novel instruments, quite different apparatuses, and which is also, I believe, absolutely incompatible with the relations of sovereignty.

This new mechanism of power is more dependent upon bodies and what they do than upon the Earth and its products. It is a mechanism of power which permits time and labour, rather than wealth and commodities, to be extracted from bodies. It is a type of power which is constantly exercised by means of surveillance rather

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than in a discontinuous manner by means of a system of levies or obligations distributed over time. It presupposes a tightly knit grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign. It is ultimately dependent upon the principle, which introduces a genuinely new economy of power, that one must be able simultaneously both to increase the subjected forces and to improve the force and efficacy of that which subjects them.

This type of power is in every aspect the antithesis of that mechanism of power which the theory of sovereignty described or sought to transcribe. The latter is linked to a form of power that is exercised over the Earth and its products, much more than over human bodies and their operations. The theory of sovereignty is something which refers to the displacement and appropriation on the part of power, not of time and labour, but of goods and wealth. It allows discontinuous obligations distributed over time to be given legal expression but it does not allow for the codification of a continuous surveillance. It enables power to be founded in the physical existence of the sovereign, but not in continuous and permanent systems of surveillance. The theory of sovereignty permits the foundation of an absolute power in the absolute expenditure of power. It does not allow for a calculation of power in terms of the minimum expenditure for the maximum return.

— This new type of power, which can no longer be formulated in terms of sovereignty, is, I believe, one of the great inventions of bourgeois society. It has been a fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism and of the type of society that is its accompaniment. This non-sovereign power, which lies outside the form of sovereignty, is disciplinary power. Impossible to describe in the terminology of the theory of sovereignty from which it differs so radically, this disciplinary power ought by rights to have led to the disappearance of the grand juridical edifice created by that theory. But in reality, the theory of sovereignty has continued not only to exist as an ideology of right, but also to provide the organising principle of the legal codes which Europe acquired in the nineteenth century, beginning with the Napoleonic Code.

Why has the theory of sovereignty persisted in this fashion as an ideology and an organising principle of these major legal codes? For two reasons, I believe. On the one hand, it has been, in the eighteenth and again in the nineteenth century, a permanent instrument of criticism of the monarchy and of all the obstacles that can thwart the development of disciplinary society. But at the same time, the theory of sovereignty, and the organisation of a legal code centred upon it, have allowed a system of right to be superimposed upon the mechanisms of discipline in such a way as to conceal its actual procedures, the element of domination inherent in its techniques, and to guarantee to everyone, by virtue of the sovereignty of the State, the exercise of his proper sovereign rights. The juridical systems — and this applies both to their codification and to their theorisation — have enabled sovereignty to be democratised through the constitution of a public right articulated upon collective sovereignty, while at the same time this democratisation of sovereignty was fundamentally determined by and grounded in mechanisms of disciplinary coercion.

To put this in more rigorous terms, one might say that once it became necessary for disciplinary constraints to be exercised through mechanisms of domination and yet at the same time for their effective exercise of power to be disguised, a

theory of sovereignty was required to make an appearance at the level of the legal

has been characterised on the one hand, by a legislation, a discourse, an organisation based on public right, whose principle of articulation is the social body and the delegative status of each citizen; and, on the other hand, by a closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions whose purpose is in fact to assure the cohesion of this same social body. Though a theory of right is a necessary companion to this grid, it cannot in any event provide the terms of its endorsement. Hence these two limits, a right of sovereignty and a mechanism of discipline, which define, I believe, the arena in which power is exercised. But these two limits are so heterogeneous that they cannot possibly be reduced to each other. The powers of modern society are exercised through, on the basis of, and by virtue of, this very heterogeneity between a public right of sovereignty and a polymorphous disciplinary mechanism. This is not to suggest that there is on the one hand an explicit and scholarly system of right which is that of sovereignty, and, on the other hand, obscure and unspoken disciplines which carry out their shadowy operations in the depths, and thus constitute the bedrock of the great mechanism of power. In reality, the disciplines have their own discourse. They engender, for the reasons of which we spoke earlier, apparatuses of knowledge (*savoir*) and a multiplicity of new domains of understanding. They are extraordinarily inventive participants in the order of these knowledge-producing apparatuses. Disciplines are the bearers of a discourse, but this cannot be the discourse of right. The discourse of discipline has nothing in common with that of law, rule, or sovereign will. The disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks of a rule, but this is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalisation. Their reference is to a theoretical horizon which of necessity has nothing in common with the edifice of right. It is human science which constitutes their domain, and clinical knowledge their jurisprudence.

In short, what I have wanted to demonstrate in the course of the last few years is not the manner in which at the advance front of the exact sciences the uncertain, recalcitrant, confused dominion of human behaviour has little by little been annexed to science: it is not through some advancement in the rationality of the exact sciences that the human sciences are gradually constituted. I believe that the process which has really rendered the discourse of the human sciences possible is the juxtaposition, the encounter between two lines of approach, two mechanisms, two absolutely heterogeneous types of discourse: on the one hand there is the reorganisation of right that invests sovereignty, and on the other, the mechanics of the coercive forces whose exercise takes a disciplinary form. And I believe that in our own times power is exercised simultaneously through this right and these techniques and that these techniques and these discourses, to which the disciplines give rise invade the area of right so that the procedures of normalisation come to be ever more constantly engaged in the colonisation of those of law. I believe that all this can explain the global functioning of what I would call a *society of normalisation*. I mean, more precisely, that disciplinary normalisations come into ever greater conflict with the juridical systems of sovereignty: their incompatibility with each other is ever more acutely felt and apparent; some kind of arbitrating discourse is

made ever more necessary, a type of power and of knowledge that the sanctity of science would render neutral. It is precisely in the extension of medicine that we see, in some sense, not so much the linking as the perpetual exchange or encounter of mechanisms of discipline with the principle of right. The developments of medicine, the general medicalisation of behaviours, conducts, discourses, desires etc., take place at the point of intersection between the two heterogeneous levels of discipline and sovereignty. For this reason, against these usurpations by the disciplinary mechanisms, against this ascent of a power that is tied to scientific knowledge, we find that there is no solid recourse available to us today, such being our situation, except that which lies precisely in the return to a theory of right organised around sovereignty and articulated upon its ancient principle. When today one wants to object in some way to the disciplines and all the effects of power and knowledge that are linked to them, what is it that one does, concretely, in real life, what do the Magistrates Union or other similar institutions do, if not precisely appeal to this canon of right, this famous, formal right, that is said to be bourgeois, and which in reality is the right of sovereignty? But I believe that we find ourselves here in a kind of blind alley: it is not through recourse to sovereignty against discipline that the effects of disciplinary power can be limited, because sovereignty and disciplinary mechanisms are ~~two~~ absolutely integral constituents of the general mechanism of power in our society.

..... If one wants to look for a non-disciplinary form of power, or rather, to struggle against disciplines and disciplinary power, it is not towards the ancient right of sovereignty that one should turn, but towards the possibility of a new form of right, one which must indeed be anti-disciplinarian, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty. It is at this point that we once more come up against the notion of repression, whose use in this context I believe to be doubly unfortunate. On the one hand, it contains an obscure reference to a certain theory of sovereignty, the sovereignty of the sovereign rights of the individual, and on the other hand, its usage introduces a system of psychological reference points borrowed from the human sciences, that is to say, from discourses and practices that belong to the disciplinary realm. I believe that the notion of repression remains a juridical-disciplinary notion whatever the critical use one would make of it. To this extent the critical application of the notion of repression is found to be vitiated and nullified from the outset by the two-fold juridical and disciplinary reference it contains to sovereignty on the one hand and to normalisation on the other.

READING - 7

Jean-François Lyotard

**THE POSTMODERN
CONDITION**

.....

I DEFINE POSTMODERN as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: But that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements – narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable.

Thus the society of the future falls less within the province of a Newtonian anthropology (such as structuralism or systems theory) than a pragmatics of language particles. There are many different language games – a heterogeneity of elements. They only give rise to institutions in patches – local determinism.

The decision makers, however, attempt to manage these clouds of sociality according to input/output matrices, following a logic which implies that their elements are commensurable and that the whole is determinable. They allocate our lives for the growth of power. In matters of social justice and of scientific truth alike, the legitimation of that power is based on its optimizing the system's performance – efficiency. The application of this criterion to all of our games necessarily entails a certain level of terror, whether soft or hard: be operational (that is, commensurable) or disappear.

The logic of maximum performance is no doubt inconsistent in many ways, particularly with respect to contradiction in the socio-economic field: It demands

both less work (to lower production costs) and more (to lessen the social burden of the idle population). But our incredulity is now such that we no longer expect salvation to rise from these inconsistencies, as did Marx.

Still, the postmodern condition is as much a stranger to disenchantment as it is to the blind positivity of delegitimation. Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? The operativity criterion is technological; it has no relevance for judging what is true or just. Is legitimacy to be found in consensus obtaining through discussion, as Jürgen Habermas thinks? Such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games. And invention is always born of dissension. Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy. [. . .]

In contemporary society and culture – postindustrial society, postmodern culture – the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.

The decline of narrative can be seen as an effect of the blossoming of techniques and technologies since the Second World War, which has shifted emphasis from the ends of action to its means; it can also be seen as an effect of the redeployment of advanced liberal capitalism after its retreat under the protection of Keynesianism during the period 1930–60, a renewal that has eliminated the communist alternative and valorized the individual enjoyment of goods and services.

Anytime we go searching for causes in this way we are bound to be disappointed. Even if we adopted one or the other of these hypotheses, we would still have to detail the correlation between the tendencies mentioned and the decline of the unifying and legitimating power of the grand narratives of speculation and emancipation.

It is, of course, understandable that both capitalist renewal and prosperity and the disorienting upsurge of technology would have an impact on the status of knowledge. But in order to understand how contemporary science could have been susceptible to those effects long before they took place, we must first locate the seeds of 'delegitimation' and nihilism that were inherent in the grand narratives of the nineteenth century.

First of all, the speculative apparatus maintains an ambiguous relation to knowledge. It shows that knowledge is only worthy of that name to the extent that it reduplicates itself ('lifts itself up,' *hebt sich auf*; is sublated) by citing its own statements in a second-level discourse (autonomy) that functions to legitimate them. This is as much as to say that, in its immediacy, denotative discourse bearing on a certain referent (a living organism, a chemical property, a physical phenomenon, etc.) does not really know what it thinks it knows. Positive science is not a form of knowledge. And speculation feeds on its suppression. The Hegelian speculative narrative thus harbors a certain skepticism toward positive learning, as Hegel himself admits.

A science that has not legitimated itself is not a true science; if the discourse that was meant to legitimate it seems to belong to a prescientific form of know-

ledge, like a 'vulgar' narrative, it is demoted to the lowest rank, that of an ideology or instrument of power. And this always happens if the rules of the science game that discourse denounces as empirical are applied to science itself.

Take for example the speculative statement: 'A scientific statement is knowledge if and only if it can take its place in a universal process of engendering.' The question is: Is this statement knowledge as it itself defines it? Only if it can take its place in a universal process of engendering. Which it can. All it has to do is to presuppose that such a process exists (the Life of spirit) and that it is itself an expression of that process. This presupposition, in fact, is indispensable to the speculative language game. Without it, the language of legitimation would not be legitimate; it would accompany science in a nosedive into nonsense, at least if we take idealism's word for it.

But this presupposition can also be understood in a totally different sense, one which takes us in the direction of postmodern culture: We could say, in keeping with the perspective we adopted earlier, that this presupposition defines the set of rules one must accept in order to play the speculative game. Such an appraisal assumes first that we accept that the 'positive' sciences represent the general mode of knowledge and second that we understand this language to imply certain formal and axiomatic presuppositions that it must always make explicit. This is exactly what Nietzsche is doing, though with a different terminology, when he shows that 'European nihilism' resulted from the truth requirement of science being turned back against itself.

There thus arises an idea of perspective that is not far removed, at least in this respect, from the idea of language games. What we have here is a process of delegitimation fueled by the demand for legitimation itself. The 'crisis' of scientific knowledge, signs of which have been accumulating since the end of the nineteenth century, is not born of a chance proliferation of sciences, itself an effect of progress in technology and the expansion of capitalism. It represents, rather, an internal erosion of the legitimacy principle of knowledge. There is erosion at work inside the speculative game, and by loosening the weave of the encyclopedic net in which each science was to find its place, it eventually sets them free.

The classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are thus called into question — disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the borders between sciences, and from these new territories are born. The speculative hierarchy of learning gives way to an immanent and, as it were, 'flat' network of areas of inquiry, the respective frontiers of which are in constant flux. The old 'faculties' splinter into institutes and foundations of all kinds, and the universities lose their function of speculative legitimation. Stripped of the responsibility for research (which was stifled by the speculative narrative), they limit themselves to the transmission of what is judged to be established knowledge, and through didactics they guarantee the replication of teachers rather than the production of researchers. This is the state in which Nietzsche finds and condemns them.

The potential for erosion intrinsic to the other legitimation procedure, the emancipation apparatus flowing from the *Aufklärung*, is no less extensive than the one at work within speculative discourse. But it touches a different aspect. Its distinguishing characteristic is that it grounds the legitimation of science and truth in the autonomy of interlocutors involved in ethical, social, and political praxis.

As we have seen, there are immediate problems with this form of legitimation: The difference between a denotative statement with cognitive value and a prescriptive statement with practice value is one of relevance, therefore of competence. There is nothing to prove that if a statement describing a real situation is true, it follows that a prescriptive statement based upon it (the effect of which will necessarily be a modification of that reality) will be just.

Take, for example, a closed door. Between 'The door is closed' and 'Open the door' there is no relation of consequence as defined in propositional logic. The two statements belong to two autonomous sets of rules defining different kinds of relevance, and therefore of competence. Here, the effect of dividing reason into cognitive or theoretical reason on the one hand, and practical reason on the other, is to attack the legitimacy of the discourse of science; not directly, but indirectly, by revealing that it is a language game with its own rules (of which the a priori conditions of knowledge in Kant provide a first glimpse) and that it has no special calling to supervise the game of praxis (nor the game of aesthetics, for that matter). The game of science is thus put on a par with the others.

If this 'delegitimation' is pursued in the slightest and if its scope is widened (as Wittgenstein does in his own way, and thinkers such as Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas in theirs) the road is then open for an important current of postmodernity: Science plays its own game; it is incapable of legitimating the other language games. The game of prescription, for example, escapes it. But above all, it is incapable of legitimating itself, as speculation assumed it could.

The social subject itself seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games. The social bond is linguistic, but is not woven with a single thread. It is a fabric formed by the intersection of at least two (and in reality an indeterminate number of) language games, obeying different rules. Wittgenstein writes: 'Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.' And to drive home that the principle of unitotality – or synthesis under the authority of a metadiscourse of knowledge – is inapplicable, he subjects the 'town' of language to the old sorites paradox by asking: 'how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?'

New languages are added to the old ones, forming suburbs of the old town: 'the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus.' Thirty-five years later we can add to the list: machine languages, the matrices of game theory, new systems of musical notation, systems of notation for nondenotative forms of logic (temporal logics, deontic logics, modal logics), the language of the genetic code, graphs of phonological structures, and so on.

We may form a pessimistic impression of this splintering: Nobody speaks all of those languages, they have no universal metalanguage, the project of the system-subject is a failure, the goal of emancipation has nothing to do with science, we are all stuck in the positivism of this or that discipline of learning, the learned scholars have turned into scientists, the diminished tasks of research have become compartmentalized and no one can master them all. Speculative or humanistic philosophy is forced to relinquish its legitimation duties, which explains why philosophy is facing a crisis wherever it persists in arrogating such functions and is reduced

to the study of systems of logic or the history of ideas where it has been realistic enough to surrender them.

Turn-of-the-century Vienna has weaned on this pessimism: not just artists such as Musil, Kraus, Hofmannsthal, Loos, Schonberg, and Broch, but also the philosophers Mach and Wittgenstein. They carried awareness of and theoretical and artistic responsibility for delegitimation as far as it could be taken. We can say today that the mourning process has been completed. There is no need to start all over again. Wittgenstein's strength is that he did not opt for the positivism that was being developed by the Vienna Circle, but outlined in his investigation of language games a kind of legitimation not based on performativity. This is what the postmodern world is all about. Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative. It in no way follows that they are reduced to barbarity. What saves them from it is their knowledge that legitimation can only spring from their own linguistic practice and communicational interaction. Science 'smiling into its beard' at every other belief has taught them the harsh austerity of realism. . . .

Legitimation by paralogy

Let us say at this point that the facts we have presented concerning the problem of the legitimation of knowledge today are sufficient for our purposes. We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives — we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse. But as we have just seen, the little narrative [*petit récit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science. In addition, the principle of consensus as a criterion of validation seems to be inadequate. It has two formulations. In the first consensus is an agreement between men, defined as knowing intellects and free wills, and is obtained through dialogue. This is the form elaborated by Habermas, but his conception is based on the validity of the narrative of emancipation. In the second, consensus is a component of the system, which manipulates it in order to maintain and improve its performance. It is the object of administrative procedures, in Luhmann's sense. In this case, its only validity is as an instrument to be used toward achieving the real goal, which is what legitimates the system — power.

The problem is therefore to determine whether it is possible to have a form of legitimation based solely on paralogy. Paralogy must be distinguished from innovation: The latter is under the command of the system, or at least used by it to improve its efficiency; the former is a move (the importance of which is often not recognized until later) played in the pragmatics of knowledge. The fact that it is in reality frequently, but not necessarily, the case that one is transformed into the other presents no difficulties for the hypothesis.

Returning to the description of scientific pragmatics [. . .] it is now dissension that much be emphasized. Consensus is a horizon that is never reached. Research that takes place under the aegis of a paradigm tends to stabilize; it is like the exploitation of a technological, economic, or artistic 'idea.' It cannot be discounted. But what is striking is that someone always comes along to disturb the order of 'reason.' It is necessary to posit the existence of a power that destabilizes the

capacity for explanation, manifested in the promulgation of new norms for understanding or, if one prefers, in a proposal to establish new rules circumscribing a new field of research for the language of science. This, in the context of scientific discussion, is the same process Thom calls morphogenesis. It is not without rules (there are classes of catastrophes), but is always locally determined. Applied to scientific discussion and placed in temporal framework, this property implies that 'discoveries' are unpredictable. In terms of the idea of transparency, it is a factor that generates blind spots and defers consensus.

This summary makes it easy to see that systems theory and the kind of legitimation it proposes have no scientific basis whatsoever; science itself does not function according to this theory's paradigm of the system, and contemporary science excludes the possibility of using such a paradigm to describe society.

In this context, let us examine two important points in Luhmann's argument. On the one hand, the system can only function by reducing complexity, and on the other, it must induce the adaptation of individual aspirations to its own ends. The reduction in complexity is required to maintain the system's power capability. If all messages could circulate freely among all individuals, the quantity of the information that would have to be taken into account before making the correct choice would delay decisions considerably, thereby lowering performativity. Speed, in effect, is a power component of the system.

The objection will be made that these molecular opinions must indeed be taken into account if the risk of serious disturbances is to be avoided. Luhmann replies – and this is the second point – that it is possible to guide individual aspirations through a process of 'quasi-apprenticeship,' 'free of all disturbance,' in order to make them compatible with the system's decisions. The decisions do not have to respect individuals' aspirations: The aspirations have to aspire to the decisions, or at least to their effects. Administrative procedures should make individuals 'want' what the system needs in order to perform well. It is easy to see what role telematics technology could play in this.

It cannot be denied that there is persuasive force in the idea that context control and domination are inherently better than their absence. The performativity criterion has its 'advantages.' It excludes in principle adherence to a metaphysical discourse; it requires the renunciation of fables; it demands clear minds and cold wills; it replaces the definition of essences with the calculation of interactions; it makes the 'players' assume responsibility not only for the statements they propose, but also for the rules to which they submit those statements in order to render them acceptable. It brings the pragmatic functions of knowledge clearly to light, to the extent that they seem to relate to the criterion of efficiency: the pragmatics of argumentation, of the production of proof, of the transmission of learning, and of the apprenticeship of the imagination.

It also contributes to elevating all language games to self-knowledge, even those not within the realm of canonical knowledge. It tends to jolt everyday discourse into a kind of metadiscourse: Ordinary statements are now displaying a propensity for self-citation, and the various pragmatic posts are tending to make an indirect connection even to current messages concerning them. Finally, it suggests that the problems of internal communication experienced by the scientific community in the course of its work of dismantling and remounting its languages are comparable in

nature to the problems experienced by the social collectivity when, deprived of its narrative culture, it must reexamine its own internal communication and in the process question the nature of the legitimacy of the decision made in its name.

At [the] risk of scandalizing the reader, I would also say that the system can count severity among its advantages. Within the framework of the power criterion, a request (that is, a form of prescription) gains nothing in legitimacy by virtue of being based on the hardship of an unmet need. Rights do not flow from hardship, but from the fact that the alleviation of hardship improves the system's performance. The needs of the most underprivileged should not be used as a system regulator as a matter of principle: Since the means of satisfying them is already known, their actual satisfaction will not improve the system's performance, but only increase its expenditures. The only counterindication is that not satisfying them can destabilize the whole. It is against the nature of force to be ruled by weakness. But it is in its nature to induce new requests meant to lead to a redefinition of the norms of 'life.' In this sense, the system seems to be a vanguard machine dragging humanity after it, dehumanizing it in order to rehumanize it at a different level of normative capacity. The technocrats declare that they cannot trust what society designates as its needs; they 'know' that society cannot know its own needs since they are not variables independent of the new technologies. Such is the arrogance of the decision makers – and their blindness.

What their 'arrogance' means is that they identify themselves with the social system conceived as a totality in quest of its most performative unity possible. If we look at the pragmatics of science, we learn that such an identification is impossible: In principle, no scientist embodies knowledge or neglects the 'needs' of a research project, or the aspirations of a researcher, on the pretext that they do not add to the performance of 'science' as a whole. The response a researcher usually makes to a request is: 'We'll have to see, tell me your story.' In principle, he does not prejudge that a case has already been closed or that the power of 'science' will suffer if it is reopened. In fact, the opposite is true.

Of course, it does not always happen like this in reality. Countless scientists have seen their 'move' ignored or repressed, sometimes for decades, because it too abruptly destabilized the accepted positions, not only in the university and scientific hierarchy, but also in the problematic. The stronger the 'move,' the more likely it is to be denied the minimum consensus, precisely because it changes the rules of the game upon which consensus had been based. But when the institution of knowledge functions in this manner, it is acting like an ordinary power center whose behavior is governed by a principle of homeostasis.

Such behavior is terrorist, as is the behavior of the system described by Luhmann. By terror I mean the efficiency gained by eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him. He is silenced or consents, not because he has been refuted, but because his ability to participate has been threatened (there are many ways to prevent someone from playing). The decision makers' arrogance, which in principle has no equivalent in the sciences, consists in the exercise of terror. It says: 'Adapt your aspirations to our ends – or else.'

Even permissiveness toward the various games is made conditional on performativity. The redefinition of the norms of life consists in enhancing the system's

competence for power. That this is the case is particularly evident in the introduction of telematics technology: The technocrats see in telematics a promise of liberalization and enrichment in the interactions between interlocutors; but what makes this process attractive for them is that it will result in new tensions in the system, and these will lead to an improvement in its performativity.

To the extent that science is differential, its pragmatics provides the antimodel of a stable system. A statement is deemed worth retaining the moment it marks a difference from what is already known, and after an argument and proof in support of it has been found. Science is a model of an 'open system,' in which a statement becomes relevant if it 'generates ideas,' that is, if it generates other statements and other game rules. Science possesses no general metalanguage into which all other languages can be transcribed and evaluated. This is what prevents its identification with the system and, all things considered, with terror. If the division between decision makers and executors exists in the scientific community (and it does), it is a fact of the socioeconomic system and not of the pragmatics of science itself. It is in fact one of the major obstacles to the imaginative development of knowledge.

The general question of legitimation becomes: What is the relationship between the antimodel of the pragmatics of science and society? Is it applicable to the vast clouds of language material constituting a society? Or is it limited to the game of learning? And if so, what role does it play with respect to the social bond? Is it an impossible ideal of an open community? Is it an essential component for the subset of decision makers, who force on society the performance criterion they reject for themselves? Or, conversely, is it a refusal to cooperate with the authorities, a move in the direction of counterculture, with the attendant risk that all possibility for research will be foreclosed due to lack of funding?

From the beginning of this study, I have emphasized the differences (not only formal, but also pragmatic) between the various language games, especially between denotative, or knowledge, games and prescriptive, or action, games. The pragmatics of science is centered on denotative utterances, which are the foundation upon which it builds institutions of learning (institutes, centers, universities, etc.). But its postmodern development brings a decisive 'fact' to the fore: Even discussions of denotative statements need to have rules. Rules are not denotative but prescriptive utterances, which we are better off calling metaprescriptive utterances to avoid confusion (they prescribe what the moves of language games must be in order to be admissible). The function of the differential or imaginative or paralogical activity of the current pragmatics of science is to point out these metaprescriptives (science's 'presuppositions') and to petition the players to accept different ones. The only legitimation that can make this kind of request admissible is that it will generate ideas, in other words, new statements.

Social pragmatics does not have the 'simplicity' of scientific pragmatics. It is a monster formed by the interweaving of various networks of heteromorphous classes of utterances (denotative, prescriptive, performative, technical, evaluative, etc.). There is no reason to think that it would be possible to determine metaprescriptives common to all of these language games or that a revisable consensus like the one in force at a given moment in the scientific community could embrace the totality of metaprescriptions regulating the totality of statements circulating in

the social collectivity. As a matter of fact, the contemporary decline of narratives of legitimation – be they traditional or ‘modern’ (the emancipation of humanity, the realization of the Idea) – is tied to the abandonment of this belief. It is its absence for which the ideology of the ‘system,’ with its pretensions to totality, tries to compensate and which it expresses in the cynicism of its criterion of performance.

For this reason, it seems neither possible, nor even prudent, to follow Habermas in orienting our treatment of the problem of legitimation in the direction of a search for universal consensus through what he calls *Diskurs*, in other words, a dialogue of argumentation.

This would be to make two assumptions. The first is that it is possible for all speakers to come to agreement on which rules or metaprescriptions are universally valid for language games, when it is clear that language games are heteromorphous, subject to heterogenous sets of pragmatic rules.

The second assumption is that the goal of dialogue is consensus. But as I have shown in the analysis of the pragmatics of science, consensus is only a particular state of discussion, not its end. Its end, on the contrary, is paralogy. This double observation (the heterogeneity of the rules and the search for dissent) destroys a belief that still underlies Habermas’s research, namely, that humanity as a collective (universal) subject seeks its common emancipation through the regularization of the ‘moves’ permitted in all language games and that the legitimacy of any statement resides in its contributing to that emancipation.

It is easy to see what function this recourse plays in Habermas’s argument against Luhmann. *Diskurs* is his ultimate weapon against the theory of the stable system. The cause is good, but the argument is not. Consensus has become an outmoded and suspect value. But justice as a value is neither outmoded nor suspect. We must thus arrive at an idea and practice of justice that is not linked to that of consensus.

A recognition of the heteromorphous nature of language games is a first step in that direction. This obviously implies a renunciation of terror, which assumes that they are isomorphic and tries to make them so. The second step is the principle that any consensus on the rules defining a game and the ‘moves’ playable within it *must* be local, in other words, agreed on by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation. The orientation then favors a multiplicity and finite meta-arguments, by which I mean argumentation that concerns metaprescriptives and is limited in space and time.

This orientation corresponds to the course that the evolution of social interaction is currently taking; the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as in political affairs. This evolution is of course ambiguous: The temporary contract is favored by the system due to its greater flexibility, lower cost, and the creative turmoil of its accompanying motivations – all of these factors contribute to increased operativity. In any case, there is no question here of proposing a ‘pure’ alternative to the system: We all now know, as the 1970s come to a close, that an attempt at an alternative of that kind would end up resembling the system it was meant to replace. We should be happy that the tendency toward the temporary contract is ambiguous: It is not totally

subordinated to the goal of the system, yet the system tolerates it. This bears witness to the existence of another goal within the system: knowledge of language games as such and the decision to assume responsibility for their rules and effects. Their most significant effect is precisely what validates the adoption of rules – the quest for paralogy.

We are finally in a position to understand how the computerization of society affects this problematic. It could become the 'dream' instrument for controlling and regulating the market system, extended to include knowledge itself and governed exclusively by the performativity principle. In that case, it would inevitably involve the use of terror. But it could also aid groups discussing metaprescriptives by supplying them with the information they usually lack for making knowledgeable decisions. The line to follow for computerization to take the second of these two paths is, in principle, quite simple: Give the public free access to the memory and data banks. Language games would then be games of perfect information at any given moment. But they would also be non-zero-sum games, and by virtue of that fact discussion would never risk fixating in a position of minimax equilibrium because it had exhausted its stakes. For the stakes would be knowledge (or information, if you will), and the reserve of knowledge – language's reserve of possible utterances – is inexhaustible. This sketches the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown.

READING - 8

EUROCENTRISM AND ITS AVATARS: THE DILEMMAS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Immanuel Wallerstein

Social Science has been Eurocentric throughout its institutional history, which means since the time that there have been departments teaching social science within university systems. This is not in the least surprising. Social science is a product of the modern world-system, and Eurocentrism is constitutive of the geoculture of the modern world. Furthermore, as an institutional structure, social science originated largely in Europe. We shall be using Europe here more as a cultural than as a cartographical expression; in this sense, in the discussion about the last two centuries, we are referring primarily and jointly to Western Europe and North America. The social science disciplines were in fact overwhelmingly located, at least up to 1945, in just five countries—France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and the United States. Even today, despite the global spread of social science as an activity, the large majority of social scientists worldwide remain Europeans. Social science emerged in response to European problems, at a point in history when Europe dominated the whole world-system. It was virtually inevitable that its choice of subject matter, its theorizing, its methodology, and its epistemology should reflect the constraints of the crucible within which it was born.

However, in the period since 1945, the decolonization of Asia and Africa, plus the sharply accentuated political consciousness of the non-European world everywhere, has affected the world of knowledge just as much as it has affected the politics of the world-system. One major such difference, today and indeed for some thirty years now at least, is that the 'Eurocentrism' of social science has been under severe

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attack. The attack is of course fundamentally justified, and there is no question that, if social science is to make any progress in the 21st century, it must overcome the Eurocentric heritage which has distorted its analyses and its capacity to deal with the problems of the contemporary world. If, however, we are to do this, we must take a careful look at what constitutes Eurocentrism, for, as we shall see, it is a hydra-headed monster and has many *avatars*. It will not be easy to slaughter the dragon swiftly. Indeed, if we are not careful, in the guise of trying to fight it, we may in fact criticize Eurocentrism using Eurocentric premises and thereby reinforce its hold on the community of scholars.

I

There are at least five different ways in which social science has been said to be Eurocentric. These do not constitute a logically tight set of categories, since they overlap in unclear ways. Still, it might be useful to review the allegations under each heading. It has been argued that social science expresses its Eurocentrism in (1) its historiography, (2) the parochiality of its universalism, (3) its assumptions about (Western) civilization, (4) its Orientalism, and (5) its attempts to impose the theory of progress.

..... Historiography

This is the explanation of European dominance of the modern world by virtue of specific European historical achievements. The historiography is probably fundamental to the other explanations, but it is also the most obviously naive variant and the one whose validity is most easily put in question. Europeans in the last two centuries have unquestionably sat on top of the world. Collectively, they have controlled the wealthiest and militarily most powerful countries. They have enjoyed the most advanced technology and were the primary creators of this advanced technology. These facts seem largely uncontested, and are indeed hard to contest plausibly. The issue is: what explains this differential in power and standard of living with the rest of the world? One kind of answer is that Europeans have done something meritorious and different from peoples in other parts of the world. This is what is meant by scholars who speak of the 'European miracle' (e.g. Jones 1981). Europeans have

launched the industrial revolution or sustained growth, or they have launched modernity, or capitalism, or bureaucratization, or individual liberty. Of course, we shall need then to define these terms rather carefully and discover whether it was really Europeans who launched whatever each of these novelties are supposed to be, and if so exactly when.

But even if we agree on the definition and the timing, and therefore so to speak on the reality of the phenomenon, we have actually explained very little. For we must then explain why it is that Europeans, and not others, launched the specified phenomenon, and why they did so at a certain moment of history. In seeking such explanations, the instinct of most scholars has been to push us back in history to presumed antecedents. If Europeans in the 18th or 16th century did x, it is said to be probably because their ancestors (or attributed ancestors, for the ancestry may be less biological than cultural, or assertedly cultural) did, or were, y in the 11th century, or in the 5th century B.C. or even further back. We can all think of the multiple explanations that, once having established or at least asserted some phenomenon that has occurred in the 16th to 19th centuries, proceed to push us back to various earlier points in European ancestry for the truly determinant variable.

There is a premise here that is not really hidden, but was for a long time undebated. The premise is that whatever is the novelty for which Europe is held responsible in the 16th to 19th centuries, this novelty is a good thing, something of which Europe should be proud, something of which the rest of the world should be envious, or at least appreciative. This novelty is perceived as an achievement, and numerous book titles bear testimony to this kind of evaluation.

There seems to me little question that the actual historiography of world social science has expressed such a perception of reality to a very large degree. This perception of course can be challenged on various grounds, and this has been increasingly the case in recent decades. One can challenge the accuracy of the picture of what happened, within Europe and in the world as a whole in the 16th to 19th centuries. One can certainly challenge the plausibility of the presumed cultural antecedents of what happened in this period. One can implant the story of the 16th to 19th centuries in a longer duration, from several centuries longer to tens of thousands of years. If one does that, one is usually

arguing that the European 'achievements' of the 16th to the 19th centuries thereby seem less remarkable, or more like a cyclical variant, or less like achievements that can be credited primarily to Europe. Finally, one can accept that the novelties were real, but argue that they were less a positive than a negative accomplishment.

This kind of revisionist historiography is often persuasive in detail, and certainly tends to be cumulative. At a certain point, the debunking, or deconstructing, may become pervasive, and perhaps a counter-theory can take hold. This is, for example, what seems to be happening (or has already happened) with the historiography of the French Revolution, where the so-called social interpretation that had dominated the literature for at least a century and a half was challenged and then to some degree toppled in the last thirty years. We are probably entering into such a so-called paradigmatic shift right now in the basic historiography of modernity.

Whenever such a shift happens, however, we ought to take a deep breath, step back, and evaluate whether the alternative hypotheses are indeed more plausible, and most of all whether they really break with the crucial underlying premises of the formerly dominant hypotheses. This is the question I wish to raise in relation to the historiography of European presumed achievements in the modern world. It is under assault. What is being proposed as a replacement? And how different is this replacement? Before, however, we can tackle this larger question, we must review some of the other critiques of Eurocentrism.

Universalism

Universalism is the view that there exist scientific truths that are valid across all of time and space. European thought of the last few centuries has been strongly universalist for the most part. This was the era of the cultural triumph of science as a knowledge activity. Science displaced philosophy as the prestige mode of knowledge and the arbiter of social discourse. The science of which we are talking is Newtonian-Cartesian science. Its premises were that the world was governed by determinist laws taking the form of linear equilibria processes, and that, by stating such laws as universal reversible equations, we only needed knowledge in addition to some set of initial conditions to permit us to predict the state of the system at any future or past time.

What this meant for social knowledge seemed clear. Social scientists might discover the universal processes that explain human behaviour, and whatever hypotheses they could verify were thought to hold across time and space, or were to be stated in ways such that they hold true across time and space. The persona of the scholar was irrelevant, since scholars were operating as value-neutral analysts. And the locus of the empirical evidence could be essentially ignored, provided the data were handled correctly, since the processes were thought to be constant. The consequences were not too different, however, in the case of those scholars whose approach was more historical and idiographic, as long as one assumed the existence of an underlying model of historical development. All stage theories (whether of Comte or Spencer or Marx, to choose only a few names from a long list) were primarily theorizations of what has been called the Whig interpretation of history, the presumption that the present is the best time ever and that the past led inevitably to the present. And even very empiricist historical writing, however much it proclaimed abhorrence of theorizing, tended nonetheless to reflect subconsciously an underlying stage theory.

Whether in the ahistorical time-reversible form of the nomothetic social scientists or the diachronic stage theory form of the historians, European social science was resolutely universalist in asserting that whatever it was that happened in Europe in the 16th to 19th centuries represented a pattern that was applicable everywhere, either because it was a progressive achievement of mankind which was irreversible or because it represented the fulfillment of humanity's basic needs via the removal of artificial obstacles to this realization. What you saw now in Europe was not only good but the face of the future everywhere.

Universalizing theories have always come under attack on the grounds that the particular situation in a particular time and place did not seem to fit the model. There have also always been scholars who argued that universal generalizations were intrinsically impossible. But in the last thirty years a third kind of attack has been made against the universalizing theories of modern social science. It has been argued that these allegedly universal theories are not in fact universal, but rather a presentation of the Western historical pattern as though it were universal. Joseph Needham quite some time ago designated as the 'fundamental error of Eurocentrism . . . the tacit postulate that modern

science and technology, which in fact took root in Renaissance Europe, is universal and that it follows that all that is European is' (cited in Abdel-Malek 1981: 89).

Social science thus has been accused of being Eurocentric insofar as it was particularistic. More than Eurocentric, it was said to be highly parochial. This hurt to the quick, since modern social science prided itself specifically on having risen above the parochial. To the degree that this charge seemed reasonable, it was far more telling than merely asserting that the universal propositions had not yet been formulated in a way that could account for every case.

Civilization

Civilization refers to a set of social characteristics that are contrasted with primitiveness or barbarism. Modern Europe considered itself to be more than merely one 'civilization' among several; it considered itself (uniquely or at least especially) 'civilized'. What characterized this state of being civilized is not something on which there has been an obvious consensus, even among Europeans. For some, civilization was encompassed in 'modernity', that is, in the advance of technology and the rise of productivity as well as the cultural belief in the existence of historic development and progress. For others, civilization meant the increased autonomy of the 'individual' *vis-a-vis* all other social actors—the family, the community, the state, the religious institutions. For others, civilization meant non-brutal behaviour in everyday life, social manners in the broadest sense. And for still others, civilization meant the decline or narrowing of the scope of legitimate violence and the broadening of the definition of cruelty. And of course, for many, civilization involved several or all of these traits in combination.

When French colonizers in the 19th century spoke of *la mission civilisatrice*, they meant that, by means of colonial conquest, France (or more generally Europe) would impose upon non-European peoples the values and norms that were encompassed by these definitions of civilization. When, in the 1990s, various groups in Western countries speak of the 'right to interfere' in political situations in various parts of the world, but almost always in non-Western parts of the world, it is in the name of such values of civilization that they are asserting such a right.

This set of values, however we prefer to designate them—civilized values, secular-humanist values—modern values permeate social science, as one might expect, since social science is a product of the same historical system that has elevated these values to the pinnacle of a hierarchy. Social scientists have incorporated such values in their definitions of the problems (the social problems, the intellectual problems) they consider worth pursuing. They have incorporated these values into the concepts they have invented with which to analyse the problems, and into the indicators they utilize to measure the concepts. Social scientists no doubt have insisted, for the most part, that they were seeking to be value-free, insofar as they claimed they were not intentionally misreading or distorting the data because of their socio-political preferences. But to be value-free in this sense does not at all mean that values, in the sense of decisions about the historical significance of observed phenomena, are absent. This is of course the central argument of Heinrich Rickert (1913) about the logical specificity of what he calls the 'cultural sciences'. They are unable to ignore 'values' in the sense of assessing social significance.

To be sure, the Western and social scientific presumptions about 'civilization' were not entirely impervious to the concept of the multiplicity of 'civilizations'. Whenever one posed the question of the origin of civilized values, how it was that they have appeared originally (or so it was argued) in the modern Western world, the answer almost inevitably was that they were the products of long-standing and unique trends in the past of the Western world—alternatively described as the heritage of Antiquity and/or of the Christian Middle Ages, the heritage of the Hebrew world, or the combined heritage of the two, the latter sometimes renamed and respecified as the Judeo-Christian heritage.

Many objections can and have been made to the set of successive presumptions. Whether the modern world, or the modern European world, is civilized in the very way the word is used in European discourse has been challenged. There is the notable quip of Mahatma Gandhi who, when asked, 'Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of Western civilization?', responded, 'It would be a good idea.' In addition, the assertion that the values of ancient Greece and Rome or of ancient Israel were more conducive to laying the base for these so-called modern values than were the values of other ancient civilizations has also been

contested. And finally whether modern Europe can plausibly claim either Greece and Rome on the one hand or ancient Israel on the other as its civilizational foreground is not at all self-evident. Indeed, there has long been a debate between those who have seen Greece or Israel as alternative cultural origins. Each side of this debate has denied the plausibility of the alternative. This debate itself casts doubt on the plausibility of the derivation.

In any case, who would argue that Japan can claim ancient Indic civilizations as its forerunner on the grounds that they were the place of origin of Buddhism, which has become a central part of Japan's cultural history? Is the contemporary United States closer culturally to ancient Greece, Rome, or Israel than Japan is to Indic civilization? One could after all make the case that Christianity, far from representing continuity, marked a decisive break with Greece, Rome, and Israel. Indeed Christians, up to the Renaissance, made precisely this argument. And is not the break with Antiquity still today part of the doctrine of Christian churches?

However, today, the sphere in which the argument about values has come to the fore is the political sphere. Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia has been very specific in arguing that Asian countries can and should 'modernize' without accepting some or all of the values of European civilization. And his views have been widely echoed by other Asian political leaders. The 'values' debate has also become central within European countries themselves, especially (but not only) within the United States, as a debate about 'multiculturalism'. This version of the current debate has indeed had a major impact on institutionalized social science, with the blossoming of structures within the university which have brought together scholars who deny the premise of the singularity of 'civilization'.

Orientalism

Orientalism refers to a stylized and abstracted statement of the characteristics of non-Western civilizations. It is the obverse of the concept 'civilization', and has become a major theme in public discussion since the writings of Anouar Abdel-Malek (1972 [1981]) and Edward Said (1978). Orientalism was not too long ago a badge of honour (see Smith 1956). Orientalism is a mode of knowledge that

claims roots in the European Middle Ages, when some intellectual Christian monks set themselves the task of understanding better non-Christian religions, by learning their languages and reading carefully their religious texts. Of course, they based themselves on the premise of the truth of Christian faith and the desirability of converting the pagans, but nonetheless they took these texts seriously as expressions, however perverted, of human culture.

When Orientalism was secularized in the 19th century, the form of the activity was not very different. Orientalists continued to learn the languages and decipher the texts. In the process, they continued to depend upon a binary view of the social world. In partial place of the Christian/pagan distinction, they placed the Western/Oriental, or modern/non-modern distinction. In the social sciences, there emerged a long line of famous polarities: military and industrial societies, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, mechanical and organic solidarity, traditional and rational-legal legitimation, statics and dynamics. Though these polarities were not usually directly related to the literature on Orientalism, we should not forget that one of the earliest of these polarities was Maine's status and contract, and it was explicitly based on a comparison of Hindu and English legal system.

Orientalists saw themselves as persons who diligently expressed their sympathetic appreciation of a non-Western civilization by devoting their lives to erudite study of texts in order to understand (*verstehen*) the culture. The culture that they understood in this fashion was of course a construct, a social construct by someone coming from a different culture. It is the validity of these constructs that has come under attack, at three different levels: it is said that the concepts do not fit the empirical reality; that they abstract too much and thus erase empirical variety; and that they are extrapolations of European prejudices.

The attack against Orientalism was however more than an attack on poor scholarship. It was also a critique of the political consequences of such social science concepts. Orientalism was said to legitimate the dominant power position of Europe, indeed to play a primary role in the ideological carapace of Europe's imperial role within the framework of the modern world-system. The attack on Orientalism has become tied to the general attack on reification, and allied to the multiple efforts to deconstruct social science narratives. Indeed, it has been argued that

some non-Western attempts to create a counter-discourse of 'Occidentalism', for example, and 'all elite discourses of anti-traditionalism in modern China, from the May Fourth movement to the 1989 Tianenmen student demonstration, have been extensively orientalized,' (Chen 1992: 687), therein sustaining rather than undermining Orientalism.

Progress

Progress, its reality, its inevitability, was a basic theme of the European Enlightenment. Some would trace it back through all of Western philosophy (Bury 1920, Nisbet 1980). In any case, it became the consensus viewpoint of 19th century Europe (and indeed remained so for most of the 20th century as well). Social science, as it was constructed, was deeply imprinted with the theory of progress.

Progress became the underlying explanation of the history of the world, and the rationale of almost all stage theories. Even more, it became the motor of all of applied social science. We were said to study social science in order better to understand the social world, because then we could more wisely and more surely accelerate progress everywhere (or at least help remove impediments in its path). The metaphors of evolution or of development were not merely attempts to describe; they were also incentives to prescribe. Social science became the advisor to (handmaiden of?) policy-makers from Bentham's panopticon to the Verein fur Sozialpolitik, to the Beveridge Report and endless other governmental commissions, to Unesco's postwar series on racism, to the successive researches of James Coleman on the U. S. educational system. After the Second World War, the 'development of underdeveloped countries' was a rubric which justified the involvement of social scientists of all political persuasions in the social and political reorganization of the non-Western world.

Progress was not merely assumed or analysed; it was imposed as well. This is perhaps not so different from the attitudes we discussed under the heading of 'civilization'. What needs to be underlined here is that, at the time when 'civilization' began to be a category that had lost its innocence and attracted suspicions (primarily after 1945), 'progress' as a category survived and was more than adequate to replace

'civilization', smelling somewhat prettier. The idea of progress seemed to serve as the last redoubt of Eurocentrism, the fallback position.

The idea of progress of course has always had conservative critics, although the vigour of their resistance could be said to have declined dramatically in the 1850-1950 period. But since at least 1968 the critics of the idea of progress have burst forth anew, with renewed vigour among the conservatives, and with newly-discovered faith on the left. There are however many different ways in which one can attack the idea of progress. One can suggest that what has been called progress is a false progress, but that a true progress exists, arguing that Europe's version was a delusion or an attempt to delude. Or one can suggest that there can be no such thing as progress, because of 'original sin' or the eternal cycle of humanity. Or one can suggest that Europe has indeed known progress but that it is now trying to keep the fruits of progress from the rest of the world, as some non-Western critics of the ecology movement have argued.

What is clear, however, is that for many the idea of progress has become labeled as a European idea, and hence has been included in the attack on Eurocentrism. This attack is often, however, rendered contradictory by the efforts of other non-Westerners to appropriate progress for part or all of the non-Western world, pushing Europe out of the picture, but not progress.

II

The multiple forms of Eurocentrism and the multiple forms of the critique of Eurocentrism do not necessarily add up to a coherent picture. What we might do is try to assess the central debate. Institutionalized social science started as an activity in Europe, as we have noted. It has been charged with painting a false picture of social reality by misreading, grossly exaggerating, and/or distorting the historical role of Europe, particularly its historical role in the modern world.

The critics fundamentally make, however, three different (and somewhat contradictory) kinds of claims. The first is that whatever it is that Europe did, other civilizations were also in the process of doing it, up to the moment that Europe used its geopolitical power to interrupt the process in other parts of the world. The second is that whatever Europe

did is nothing more than a continuation of what others had already been doing for a long time, with the Europeans temporarily coming to the foreground. The third is that whatever Europe did has been analysed incorrectly and subjected to inappropriate extrapolations, which have had dangerous consequences for both science and the political world. The first two arguments, widely offered, seem to me to suffer from what I would term 'anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism'. The third argument seems to me to be undoubtedly correct, and deserves our full attention. What kind of curious animal could 'anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism' be? Let us take each of these arguments in turn.

There have been throughout the 20th century persons who have argued that, within the framework of say Chinese, or Indian, or Arab-Muslim 'civilization', there existed both the cultural foundations and the socio-historical pattern of development that would have led to the emergence of full-fledged modern capitalism, or indeed was in the process of leading in that direction. In the case of Japan, the argument is often even stronger, asserting that modern capitalism did develop there, separately but temporally coincident with its development in Europe. The heart of most of these arguments is a stage theory of development (frequently its Marxist variant), from which it logically followed that different parts of the world were all on parallel roads to modernity or capitalism. This form of argument presumed both the distinctiveness and social autonomy of the various civilizational regions of the world on the one hand and their common subordination to an overarching pattern on the other.

Since almost all the various arguments of this kind are specific to a given cultural zone and its historical development, it would be a massive exercise to discuss the historical plausibility of the case of each civilizational zone under discussion. I do not propose to do so here. What I would point out is one logical limitation to this line of argument, whatever the region under discussion, and one general intellectual consequence. The logical limitation is very obvious. Even if it is true that various other parts of the world were going down the road to modernity/capitalism, perhaps were even far along this road, this still leaves us with the problem of accounting for the fact that it was the West, or Europe, that reached there first, and was consequently able to

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'conquer the world'. At this point, we are back to the question as originally posed, why modernity/capitalism in the West?

Of course, today there are some who are denying that Europe in a deep sense did conquer the world on the grounds that there has always been resistance, but this seems to me to be stretching our reading of reality. There was after all real colonial conquest that covered a large portion of the globe. There are after all real military indicators of European strength. No doubt there were always multiple forms of resistance, both active and passive, but if the resistance were truly so formidable, there would be nothing for us to discuss today. If we insist too much on non-European agency as a theme, we end up whitewashing all of Europe's sins, or at least most of them. This seems to me not what the critics were intending.

In any case, however temporary we deem Europe's domination to be, we still need to explain it. Most of the critics pursuing this line of argument are more interested in explaining how Europe interrupted an indigenous process in their part of the world than in explaining how it was that Europe was able to do this. Even more to the point, by attempting to diminish Europe's credit for this deed, this presumed 'achievement', they reinforce the theme that it was an achievement. The theory makes Europe into an 'evil hero'—no doubt evil, but also no doubt a hero in the dramatic sense of the term, for it was Europe that made the final spurt in the race and crossed the finish line first. And worse still, there is the implication, not too far beneath the surface, that, given half a chance, Chinese, or Indians, or Arabs not only could have, but would have, done the same—that is, launch modernity/capitalism, conquer the world, exploit resources and people, and play themselves the role of evil hero.

This view of modern history seems to be very Eurocentric in its anti-Eurocentrism, because it accepts the significance (that is, the value) of the European 'achievement' in precisely the terms that Europe has defined it, and merely asserts that others could have done it too, or were doing it too. For some possibly accidental reason, Europe got a temporary edge on the others and interfered with their development forcibly. The assertion that the others could have been Europeans too seems to me a very feeble way of opposing Eurocentrism, and actually

reinforces the worst consequences of Eurocentric thought for social knowledge.

The second line of opposition to Eurocentric analyses denies that there is anything really new in what Europe did. This line of argument starts by pointing out that, as of the late Middle Ages, and indeed for a long time before that, Western Europe was a marginal (peripheral) area of the Eurasian continent, whose historical role and cultural achievements were below the level of various other parts of the world (such as the Arab world or China). This is undoubtedly true, at least as a first-level generalization. A quick jump is then made to situating modern Europe within the construction of an ecumene or world structure that has been in creation for several thousand years (see various authors in Sanderson 1995). This is not implausible, but the systemic meaningfulness of this ecumene has yet to be established, in my view. We then come to the third element in the sequence. It is said to follow from the prior marginality of Western Europe and the millennial construction of a Eurasian world ecumene that whatever happened in Western Europe was nothing special and simply one more variant in the historical construction of a singular system.

This latter argument seems to me conceptually and historically very wrong. I do not intend however to reargue this case (see Wallerstein 1992a). I wish merely to underline the ways in which this is anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism. Logically, it requires arguing that capitalism is nothing new, and indeed some of those who argue the continuity of the development of the Eurasian ecumene have explicitly taken this position. Unlike the position of those who are arguing that a given other civilization was also en route to capitalism when Europe interfered with this process, the argument here is that we were all of us doing this together, and that there was no real development towards capitalism because the whole world (or at least the whole Eurasian ecumene) was always capitalist in some sense for several thousand years.

Let me point out first of all that this is the classic position of the liberal economists. This is not really different from Adam Smith arguing that there exists a 'propensity [in human nature] to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another' (1937 [1776]: 13). It eliminates essential differences between different historical systems. If the Chinese, the

Egyptians, and the West Europeans have all been doing the same thing historically, in what sense are they different civilizations, or different historical systems? (per contra, see Amin 1991). In eliminating credit to Europe, is there any credit left to anyone except to pan-humanity?

But again worst of all, by appropriating what modern Europe did for the balance-sheet of the Eurasian ecumene, we are accepting the essential ideological argument of Eurocentrism, that modernity (or capitalism) is miraculous, and wonderful, and merely adding that everyone has always been doing it in one way or another. By denying European credit, we deny European blame. What is so terrible about Europe's 'conquest of the world' if it is nothing but the latest part of the ongoing march of the ecumene? Far from being a form of argument that is critical of Europe, it implies applause that Europe, having been a 'marginal' part of the ecumene, at last learned the wisdom of the others (and elders) and applied it successfully.

And the unspoken clincher follows inevitably. If the Eurasian ecumene has been following a single thread for thousands of years, and the capitalist world-system is nothing new, then what possible argument is there that would indicate that this thread will not continue forever, or at least for an indefinitely long time? If capitalism did not begin in the 16th (or the 18th) century, it is surely not about to end in the twenty-first. Personally, I simply do not believe this, and I have made the case in several recent writings (Wallerstein 1995; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1996). My main point, however, is that this line of argument is in no way anti-Eurocentric, since it accepts the basic set of values that have been put forward by Europe in its period of world dominance, and thereby in fact denies and/or undermines competing value systems that were, or are, in honour in other parts of the world.

I think we have to find sounder bases for being against Eurocentrism in social science, and sounder ways of pursuing this objective. For the third form of criticism—that whatever Europe did has been analysed incorrectly and subjected to inappropriate extrapolations, which have had dangerous consequences for both science and the political world—is indeed true. I think we have to start with questioning the assumption that what Europe did was a positive achievement. I think we have to engage ourselves in making a careful balance-sheet of what has been accomplished by capitalist civilization during its historical life, and

assess whether the pluses are indeed greater than the minuses. This is something I tried once, and I encourage others to do the same (see Wallerstein 1992b): My own balance-sheet is negative overall, and therefore I do not consider the capitalist system to have been evidence of human progress. Rather, I consider it to have been the consequence of a breakdown in the historic barriers against this particular version of an exploitative system. I consider that the fact that China, India, the Arab world and other regions did not go forward to capitalism evidence that they were better immunized against the toxin, and to their historic credit. To turn their credit into something which they must explain away is to me the quintessential form of Eurocentrism.

Let me be clear: I believe that, in all major historical systems ('civilizations'), there have always been a certain degree of commodification and hence of commercialization. As a consequence, there have always been persons who sought profits in the market. But there is a world of difference between a historical system in which there exist some entrepreneurs or merchants or 'capitalists' and one in which the capitalist ethos and practice is dominant. Prior to the modern world system, what happened in each of these other historical systems is that whenever capitalist strata got too wealthy or too successful or too intrusive on existing institutions, other institutional groups (cultural, religious, military, political) attacked them, utilizing both their substantial power and their value-systems to assert the need to restrain and contain the profit-oriented strata. As a result, these strata were frustrated in their attempts to impose their practices on the historical system as a priority. They were often crudely and rudely stripped of accumulated capital, and in any case made to give obeisance to values and practices that inhibited them. This is what I mean by the anti-toxins that contained the virus.

What happened in the Western world is that, for a specific set of reasons that were momentary (or conjunctural, or accidental), the anti-toxins were less available or less efficacious, and the virus spread rapidly, and then proved itself invulnerable to later attempts at reversing its effects. The European world-economy of the 16th century became irremediably capitalist. And once capitalism consolidated itself in this historical system, once this system was governed by the priority of the ceaseless accumulation of capital, it acquired a kind of strength *vis-a-vis*

other historical systems that enabled it to expand geographically until it absorbed physically the entire globe, the first historical system ever to achieve this kind of total expansion.

The fact that capitalism had this kind of breakthrough in the European arena, and then expanded to cover the globe, does not however mean that this was inevitable, or desirable, or in any sense progressive. In my view, it was none of these. And an anti-Eurocentric point of view must start by asserting this.

I would prefer, therefore, to reconsider what is not universalist in the universalist doctrines that have emerged from the historical system that is capitalist, our modern world-system. The modern world-system has developed structures of knowledge that are significantly different from previous structures of knowledge. It is often said that what is different is the development of scientific thought. But it seems clear that this is not true, however splendid modern scientific advances are. Scientific thought long antedates the modern world, and is present in all major civilizational zones. This has been magistrally demonstrated for China in the corpus of work that Joseph Needham launched (Needham 1954).

What is specific to the structures of knowledge in the modern world-system is the concept of the 'two cultures'. No other historical system has instituted a fundamental divorce between science and philosophy/humanities, or what I think would be better characterized as the separation of the quest for the true and the quest for the good and the beautiful. Indeed, it was not all that easy to enshrine this divorce within the geoculture of the modern world-system. It took three centuries before the split was institutionalized. Today, however, it is fundamental to the geoculture, and forms the basis of our university systems.

This conceptual split has enabled the modern world to put forward the bizarre concept of the value-neutral specialist, whose objective assessments of reality could form the basis not merely of engineering decisions (in the broadest sense of the term) but of socio-political choices as well. Shielding the scientists from collective assessment, and in effect merging them into the category of technocrats, did liberate scientists from the dead hand of intellectually irrelevant authority. But simultaneously, it removed them from the major underlying social decisions we have been taking for the last 500 years, from substantive (as opposed to technical) scientific debate. The idea that science is over

here and socio-political decisions are over there is the core concept that sustains Eurocentrism, since the only universalist propositions that have been acceptable are those which are Eurocentric. Any argument that reinforces this separation of the two cultures thus sustains Eurocentrism. If one denies the specificity of the modern world, one has no plausible way of arguing for the reconstruction of knowledge structures, and therefore no plausible way of arriving at intelligent and substantively rational alternatives to the existing world-system.

In the last twenty years or so, the legitimacy of this divorce has been challenged for the first time in a significant way. This is the meaning of the ecology movement, for example. And this is the underlying central issue in the public attack on Eurocentrism. The challenges have resulted in so-called science wars and culture wars, which have themselves often been obscurantist and obfuscating. If we are to emerge with a reunited, and thereby non-Eurocentric, structure of knowledge, it is absolutely essential that we not be diverted into side paths that avoid this central issue. If we are to construct an alternative world system to the one that is today in grievous crisis, we must treat simultaneously and inextricably the issues of the true and the good.

And if we are to do that we have to recognize that something special was indeed done by Europe in the 16th to 18th centuries that did indeed transform the world, but in a direction whose negative consequences are upon us today. We must cease trying to deprive Europe of its specificity on the deluded premise that we are thereby depriving it of an illegitimate credit. Quite the contrary. We must fully acknowledge the particularity of Europe's reconstruction of the world because only then will it be possible to transcend it, and to arrive hopefully at a more inclusively universalist vision of human possibility, one that avoids none of the difficult and imbricated problems of pursuing the true and the good in tandem.

NOTE

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1

India Must Rediscover Itself

Krishnan: Forgive me for asking a rather naive question. Could you tell me how, and why you took a keen interest in the functioning of pre-British Indian society, especially of the late eighteenth century. I am asking this because, I understand, you are not an academic scholar/researcher by training or by profession.

Dharampal: This has to be explained in terms of my long association with the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD). I was its Secretary from 1958 to 1964. AVARD was interested in studying the working of the panchayat system in our villages. Working with and for AVARD I came to realise that Indian society, by and large, functioned according to traditional idioms and beliefs and that I, like many other 'outward-looking' Indians, was not aware of the indigenous social system and its dynamics.

I shall give you a concrete instance of this. I visited a village in Fajasaban as a member of a team to study the working of the panchayat. We found that the panchayat had constructed a new building. When we went through the panchayat records and proceedings, there was no mention about the decision to construct a new building for the village panchayat. On inquiry, we were informed that the decision to construct a building was taken at what they called *bees biswa panchayat* (20 parts panchayat), an 'unofficial' panchayat along traditional lines which was more representative of the village than the statutory panchayat.

This was an interesting case of how the villagers perceived certain things and how they reacted to things from outside. It also showed how little we knew about our villages. I had similar experiences in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and

*An interview with Dharampal by Mr. G. S. R. Krishnan. Published in *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, March 1983.

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other places. Between 1963-1965, we undertook a study of the working of the panchayat system in Tamil Nadu. I visited several districts of Tamil Nadu, talking to knowledgeable people and holding discussions with panchayat leaders. In Tanjore, I met the chairman of the local Bharat Sevak Samaj. He told me about the existence of over 100 *samudayam* villages in Tanjore area even around 1937. *Samudayam* villages are those in which while members had specific shares in the land of the village, the land, which any of them cultivated, was changed from time to time and the whole land vested in the village community. Such a change was based on the assumption that a certain alteration occurs in the fertility of all land from time to time which creates inequality among the members of the community and hence occasional redistribution was considered necessary.

When I went through the revenue records and other reports, I found that in the district of Tanjore around 30 per cent of the villages were classed as *samudayam* villages in 1807. The more I went into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century records, the more I was convinced that the picture of Indian society that we all have is wrong. Someone had to go through the late eighteenth century British records and I thought I should begin and do whatever I can.

K: So you were not looking into any specific aspect of pre-British Indian society?

D: I was interested in having an accurate picture, as far as possible, of Indian society before the British conquered it.

K: But I think most of your work is on the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century Indian society, as seen through British reports/records. Would it be proper to call it pre-British Indian society?

D: True. My work is on the late eighteenth century period because I could get source material only for that period. Further, as I was interested in the impact of the British rule on Indian society, I had to start with the British occupation of India, which became a reality around 1750. Systematic record keeping began only from 1750 or so because the British officials were not only required to, but even encouraged to, file detailed reports about what they saw and heard, for their masters in England. I must say that the material available for the period 1750-1830 is very detailed and more informative than the reports after 1850 or so. During the earlier period British reporting is more free and full of details. Maybe once the British Government had the necessary basic information about India and as their hold on India tightened, officials were asked to furnish information in a prescribed format.

K: Or was it due to the changeover from the East India Company rule to the direct British rule of India?

D: I think this distinction between the East India Company rule and the British rule is a bogus one. In fact from 1784 onwards, the East India Company

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had very little to do with the making of any decision about India. The job of decision making and in many instances even the drafting of the more crucial detailed instructions became a responsibility of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, set up by an Act of the British Parliament in 1784. The change which was brought about in 1858 was the elimination of the essentially clerical role of the company and entrusting this task also to an expanded establishment called the Department of the Secretary of State of India. This means, it was not the East India Company which ruled India up to 1858. The British Government had full control over the affairs of the Company from 1784 itself and so the distinction is neither valid nor useful.

K: Let me ask a different question. Why was it easy for the British to subjugate this country? What factors in pre-British Indian society were responsible for it?

D: Let me make one thing clear. I really do not know much about the pre-British Indian society, its strength and weaknesses. My knowledge is only about the late eighteenth century India, that too gathered from British records and other sources. More data is needed before one can answer questions about pre-British Indian society. But I can say this much. Around 1700 there was a breakdown of the central authority of the Mughals in India. What followed was a period of great political resurgence. In many parts of India, local rulers – the rajas and princes – began asserting their rights. But this political resurgence was too slow and weak in relation to the imperial force of the British and other European powers, like the French. And when the British began step by step to conquer the country, these rulers were not able to unite and fight.

K: Was it that Indian feudalism could not withstand the attack from a nascent capitalist social organisation...

D: I don't know if we had feudalism. I say this because behind these labels are hidden several assumptions about the nature of social organisation. For instance, when we say the central authority of the Mughals, it is immediately taken as a centralised state and so on. I saw a letter written by Aurangzeb to his grandson. The letter states two things: (a) that the exchequer receipts in Jehangir's time was Rs. 60 lakhs and the expenditure was Rs. 1.5 crore. So there was a deficit and this was met from the savings which Akbar had left; (b) that Shahjehan, who followed Jehangir, increased the receipts to Rs. 1.5 crore and reduced the expenditure to Rs. 1 crore. But estimates of the total revenue during the Mughal period are between Rs. 10 crores and Rs. 20 crores. If only a small portion of the total revenue was received by the emperor, what happened to the rest of the revenue. I think all historians are convinced that even during the reign of Aurangzeb the maximum exchequer receipt never exceeded 20 per cent of the claimed revenue of the empire. The usual explanation is that the remaining 80 per cent was distributed among the feudal lords.

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My surmise is that the overwhelming proportion of revenue was left at the local level itself, to be spent on activities, prescribed by age-old customs, such as running of *choultries* or *chateaus*, *patashalas* or schools, maintenance of tanks etc., grants to temples and other religious activities, honorarium to scholars, poets, medical-men, astrologers, magicians etc. This must have been a very ancient arrangement which was followed even during the Mughal period. But when the British came they step by step started collecting 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the gross produce as revenue from all sources and one can imagine the consequences. It took away all the surplus that our villagers had, and as a result they could no longer maintain *chattrans* or temples, tanks or schools.

K: Do you mean the British did this consciously?

D: The British did what was natural for them to do. In England the peasants paid over 50 per cent of their produce to the landlords and coming to the conclusion that as conquerors they owned all land, etc., the British imposed the same on us. It is not that they invented it for India. Wherever they went they did the same thing. Probably the British thought that it was the right thing to do, because they had a concept of state and society which was a centralised one. This goes back to almost 1,000 years and was not because of the coming of capitalism in England. For instance, after the Norman conquest in around 1100 A.D., nearly 95 per cent of the resources of England were gathered and distributed among the conquerors, that is the king, the established churches and the new nobility.

K: Would you then say that India in 1750 or earlier was much better than England? What was the condition of the common man in India?

D: I am not very sure if, on the basis of the available data, one can compare the two societies. But there are certain facts that give us a very different picture of Indian society. For instance, the question of agricultural productivity and wages in India was discussed in Britain, in the *Edinburgh Review* of July 1804. On comparison it was found that the productivity in India was several times higher than in Britain. What surprised the British even more was the finding that the wages of the Indian agricultural labourer in real terms were substantially higher than his counterpart in Britain.

It was even remarked that if they were high at the time (1800) when the Indian economy was on a decline, how much higher such wages must have been earlier? Or look at the data on the consumption pattern around 1806 from the district of Bellary. British authorities were concerned with estimating the total consumption of the people of the district and indicating the detailed consumption pattern of three categories of families (these categories were introduced by the British). The quantity of foodgrains estimated to have been consumed in all the three categories was the same, that is half seer of grain per person per day. There were 23 other items like pulses, ghee, oil, coconuts,

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vegetables, betel nuts, etc. The total per capita per annum consumption was estimated at Rs. 17 for those in the first category, Rs. 9 for those in the second category and Rs. 7 for those in the third category.

In Tanjore in 1805, the number of *mirasdars* (those with permanent rights in land) was put at 62,000 of which 42,000 belonged to the *sudras* and castes below them. In the Baramahals (the present Salem district) the number of cultivators of the group termed *pariah* was estimated at 32,474 out of a total population of around 6 lakhs. In 1799, in Chingleput district, the number of *mirasdars* actually listed was 8,300 and the collector was of the view that the actual number was ten times more. If one looks deep enough, corresponding images of other aspects of Indian life and society emerge from British records of the late eighteenth century. For example, Mr. Alexander Read, who originated the Madras land revenue system said that the only noticeable difference between the nobility and servants in Hyderabad around 1780 was that the clothes of the former were more clean.

K: I think your forthcoming book on education in pre-British India has some interesting facts.

D: Yes. For instance, a detailed survey of the surviving indigenous system of education was carried out in the Madras Presidency during 1822-1825. The survey indicated that 11,575 schools and 1,094 colleges were still then in existence in the Presidency and that the number of students were 1,57,195 and 5,431 respectively. The much more surprising information this survey provided is with regard to the broader caste composition of the students in the schools. According to it those belonging to the *sudras* and castes below them formed 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the total students in Tamil-speaking areas; 62 per cent in the Oriya areas; 54 per cent in the Malayalam speaking areas; and 35 per cent to 40 per cent in Telugu-speaking areas. The Governor of Madras further estimated that over 25 per cent of the boys of the school-going age were attending these schools and that a substantial proportion were receiving education at home. In Madras about 26,000 boys were receiving their education at home and about 5,500 were attending schools. In Malabar, the number of those engaged in college level studies at home was about 1,600 as compared to a mere 75 in a college run by the family of the then impoverished Samudrin Raja. Again, in the district of Malabar the number of Muslim girls attending schools was surprisingly large, 1,122 girls as compared to 3,196 Muslim boys. Incidentally, the number of Muslim girls attending school there 60 years later, in 1884-1885, was just 700 or

* This book was published in 1983 by Biblia Impex, New Delhi, entitled *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century*. After being out of print for quite some time, it has been published as *Dharampal Collected Writings Vol III*, by Other India Press, Goa.

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so. I have reproduced most of the documents in my book. A number of our notions about education in pre-British Indian society have to be discarded in the light of these British reports and surveys.

K: Your book *Indian Science and Technology in the Eighteenth Century* is a remarkable piece of work. How did you get the material you have reproduced there? How did our scholars and scientists react to your work?

D: As I said earlier, I was not really looking for material on science and technology or education in pre-British India. It so happened that when I was going through material on various aspects of Indian society of this period, I also came across some material on science and technology. Apart from giving an understanding about the nature of our science and technology, this material revealed a lot about the nature of our social organisation. I started gathering some more material and my friends insisted that I should publish the material on science and technology, nothing else. So it was published. Some top people in the science establishment admitted in private conversations that what I have argued seemed correct. But strangely not a single serious review was published on this work in any leading journal in India.

K: Would you like to highlight some of our achievements in science and technology?

D: Take astronomy and mathematics. There is an interesting paper by Sir Robert Barker, who was the British Commander-in-Chief in Bengal and later a member of British Parliament, on the famous observatory at Benaras. In fact, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* till its 1823 edition considered this observatory as one of the five celebrated observatories of the world. There is a paper, published in 1790, by John Playfair, FRS and Professor of Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh. Playfair's paper is actually a detailed review of a book, the famous French historian of astronomy, Bailly, wrote on Indian astronomy.

Around the same year, a paper by Ruben Burrow on Binomial Theorem was published. Then we have the account of Le Gentil who was an assistant to the famous Cassini, about how the Tamils calculated the eclipse, without pen and pencil, computing with shells on the basis of memorised tables. Regarding technology there are many papers that speak of our excellent agricultural techniques.

There is a big report by Col. Alexander Walker written around 1820, on the agriculture in Malabar and Gujarat. There is a very interesting paper on inoculation against small pox written by Holwell, who himself was a medical man and was for a short period Governor of Bengal. He described in great detail the practice of inoculation in Bengal and other areas. The British banned the Indian method of inoculation against small pox in 1802-1803.

* Republished as *Dharampal Collected Writings*, Vol I, by Other India Press, Goa.

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There is a paper by Capt. Halcott on the drill plough employed in south India. He has said that he never imagined a drill plough, considered as a modern European invention, at work in remote villages in India. He also described the construction of the drill plough as very simple and neat. There are accounts of the Indian process of making steel which was called 'wootz'. The British experts who examined samples of 'wootz' sent to them by one Dr. Helms Scott have commented that it is decidedly superior compared to any other steel they have seen. There are also accounts of ice-making, paper making, and making of mortar.

K: But there were also Britishers who described India and Indians as wretched, miserable ignorant and so on.

D: I think it is a false impression that the early nineteenth century British mind was in any sense concerned with economic or social backwardness of India and that its usage of terms like 'ignorance', 'misery', pertain to any socio-economic context. What obtained in the early nineteenth century Britain were a well defined hierarchical structure, a rigorous legal system, an administrative and military structure admission to which was based on birth, patronage or purchase. To such a mind the liveliness of ordinary Indian society, its relative cohesive social structure, its educational institutions, admission to which did not depend on wealth, its joint ownership of land, etc. were points not in its favour but elements which indicated its depravity and laxity.

There was a debate in the House of Commons in 1813. Many members were of the view that the people of India and the Indian society (in spite of the turmoil and disorganisation it was passing through) were still to be envied for their enlightened manners, their tolerance, their social cohesiveness and their relative prosperity. The debate was primarily concerned with the saving of the soul of the Indian people and its main mover was the great nineteenth century Englishman, Mr. William Wilberforce. He argued that Greece and Rome were wretched till they got converted to Christianity. Therefore, it was impossible that the Indians could be happy, enlightened, in their unchristian state. Mr. Wilberforce concluded that India must be wretched, depraved and sunk deep in ignorance till they could become Christians.

So, I believe the terms wretched, ignorant, etc. were used to describe religious India. Indians were more religious than socio-economic. In fact, socio-economic backwardness may be taken as a post-1800 phenomenon in India. It seems to have been caused by a colossal disorganisation of the Indian body-politic and by the centralisation of authority and resources by the British system. The result was that for the next hundred years such authority and the ever increasing resources it began to command was applied to the purpose of further conquests, including areas extending up to China and St. Helena. It was also used in the erection and maintenance of the new metropolises and the military

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cantonments and the export of maximum possible revenue for the larger purposes of the British economy.

But once disorganisation, impoverishment and subjugation had gone far enough and could not go any further without having adverse effects on the total revenue receipts, the whole of Indian society was placed under a sort of freeze and it became the task of scholarship to establish that such impoverishment and disorganisation had been endemic to Indian culture.

K: But there certainly was something in Indian culture which prevented us from resisting the British in a big way. Was it our passivity or tolerance?

D: The surface appearance of this society is of lethargy, of exhaustion, of seeming sloth or to put it differently, of tolerance and passivity. But there seem to have been deep feelings of justice and injustice, of righteousness and unrighteousness, of an undercurrent of pulsating activity beneath the surface passivity. A moral sense about things seem to have been deeply entrenched. When it seems to have been violated there was recourse to opposition, to protest, to peasant movements and even what may be called civil disobedience.

For example, around 1803, the assistant collector of the principal collector of Canara reported that things were getting worse, that 11,000 persons met at a place called Yenoor and avowed their determination not to pay taxes and that about 300 ryots entered the *tehsildar's* office and complained about the oppressive stamp regulation, salt and tobacco monopolies, etc. The assistant collector also stated that the villagers have excommunicated a person who commenced paying *kists* and that the ferment had reached Baroor and might soon reach Cundapoor.

There were protest movements against the imposition by the British of a tax on houses and shops in 1810-11. The tax was introduced in the Bengal presidency areas in October 1810. It was opposed by the people of Varanasi (Benaras), Patna, Bhagalpur, Murshidabad and Sarun. The district collector and magistrate of Varanasi have in their dispatches to the Governor General in Council at Fort William, Calcutta, given detailed accounts of the movement against the house tax. For instance, the collector says that the whole city has stopped all work for days together creating a situation that not even the dead could be cremated and had to be cast in the river Ganga without the performance of customary rites.

According to him over 20,000 persons had been continually sitting in *dharna*, while another estimate placed the number of people collected between Secroic and the city at over 2 lakhs. But it may be true, Indians were not equal to the British in military organisation, or the management of centralised systems.

K: You have argued (in Civil Disobedience and Indian Tradition) that civil disobedience is a very ancient Indian method of protest against injustice. Was Gandhi aware of this tradition?*

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D: There are two views about the origin of non-cooperation and civil disobedience initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. One view says that Gandhiji learnt it from Thoreau and Ruskin. According to the other view it was Mahatma Gandhi's own unique discovery. Mahatma Gandhi provides indication of his primary inspiration in *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhiji has written that the view that we should obey laws whether good or bad, is a modern one and that there was no such thing in former days. He also said that we in India generally used passive resistance in all departments of life and gave an instance of such non-cooperation in a small kingdom in Saurashtra in which the villagers offended by some order issued by the prince immediately began vacating the village. The prince admitted his error and there was a reconciliation.

I am not saying that Mahatma Gandhi's discovery of civil disobedience was just a borrowal from Indian tradition. In a way it must have come out of his own being. Maybe, his knowledge of its advocacy in the west provided him additional confirmation. But I think it is the Indian tradition of non-cooperation which made its application on a large scale possible under his leadership. It appears that Gandhiji had a more correct idea of the ruler-ruled relationship in India than the historians. Even without going very far back into Indian tradition or history, a systematic search of Indian and British materials of the eighteenth and nineteenth century provides ample evidence of the correctness of Gandhiji's view. My book on civil disobedience is an attempt in that direction.

K: It is quite interesting and means that we, in India, had a different theory of polity which did not grant the ruler or the king absolute power.

D: Yes, in *Mahabharata* it is stated that the people should gird themselves up and kill a cruel king who does not protect his subjects, who extracts taxes and robs them of their wealth, etc. Such a king is considered *kali* or the evil incarnate. It is further said that such a king should be killed like a dog that is afflicted with madness.

K: But we had several kings who were evil incarnate....

D: Of course. We are talking only about political theory. But, I believe, in the West the king had absolute power, I mean in theory.

K: But how did the view that the king in Hindu polity is a tyrant gain currency?

D: May be the behaviour of our princes during the British rule created such an impression. I think it is more because of lack of sufficient knowledge about our history and culture.

K: What do you say about the caste system? I suppose you would not say that the problem of caste is only a post-1800 one. I feel caste poses a lot of problems when we begin defending our tradition.

* Republished as *Dharampal's Collected Writings*, Vol I, by Other India Press, Goa.

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D: You are right. Caste seems to be the major symbol of India's backwardness. But how have we arrived at such a conclusion? Like villages, castes have been invariable constituents of Indian society throughout history. It is true that according to *Manusmriti* etc., society in India was at a certain stage divided into four *varnas*. But while castes and tribes have existed in India and continue to exist today, never before in history do they seem to have posed a major problem.

Historically they have existed side by side, they have interacted among themselves, groups of them have had ritual or real fights with each other and so on. Contrary to accepted assumptions and perhaps to *Manusmriti* law, when the British began to conquer India, the majority of Rajas had been from the *sudra varna*. It is possible that the existence of separate castes and tribes have historically been responsible for the relative weakness of Indian polity. On the other hand it can also be argued that the existence of castes added to the tenacity of Indian society, to its capacity to survive, and to be able to stand up again. Under what circumstances and what arrangements castes are divisive of Indian society or lead to its cohesion are questions which still have no conclusive answer.

For the British, caste was a great obstacle, an unmitigated evil not because they believed in castelessness or a non-hierarchical system but because it stood in the way of their breaking Indian society. I think caste did hinder the process of atomisation of Indian society and made the task of conquest and governance more difficult. The present fury and theoretical formulation against the organisation of Indian society into castes, whatever the justification or otherwise of caste today, thus begins with British rule.

K: But did not British rule bring about a feeling of nationalism or at least, that is what our textbooks say.

D: First of all, whether India should remain a unified nation state is itself a difficult question to answer. India remains India not because of the centralised rule, but because of the unity of our culture. There are any number of instances of Indian villagers, assumed to be illiterate and ignorant people going on pilgrimage from north to south or south to north. There are villages in the Himalayas which are Tamil settlements known as *paris*.

I think the period from 1750-1947 is largely a dead period in Indian history. This may be an extreme statement. But I think it is true. Ultimately this period should be written off. Nothing was achieved in this period, in terms of creativity or originality. On the contrary people have suffered in every respect and became lesser human beings.

K: One last question. What is the relevance of looking back at our tradition. Do you think a reversal of the process is possible, even if it is desirable?

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D: I think the solution lies in the reversal of the process which brought about our present problems. To an extent a reversal did begin to happen, especially at the psychological and conceptual levels under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. His concept of *swadeshi*, in fact, dealt even with the ethnocentric aspect of the term 'backwardness'. But evidently it did not get far.

The alien moorings and structuring of the Indian political administrative system are not attracted to it. To them what happened to India during British rule, while regrettable, represents an irreversible process of history. If what has happened in the West has universal validity and all cultures and civilisations must pass through such a process, then what India has to do is already charted out. In fact, that is what has been taking place in India during the last three decades or so, in the name of development or planning. If we are convinced of such inevitability, the best course will be to accelerate the process of the atomisation of Indian society and bring the millennium sooner.

But if we believe that culture and civilisations can renew themselves only through ways which have their source in their own psyche, then we have to make a great spiritual and intellectual effort to come into our own. One has to fall back on what may be called by a blanket term 'indigenous resources' and demolish what has to be demolished, save what could be saved.

It is not necessary that all experience of others in the achievement of similar tasks has to be shunned. When properly analysed and digested such experience may be very valuable. Also, such renewal and restructuring would require considerable redistribution of the capital resources and wealth within India. That is, a movement of resources and incomes from the metropolis to the areas where such resources had originally arisen. Such transfers may also have to happen on an international level. But such transfers, if they happen, will be in the nature of reparations rather than charity and aid, and thus will have a different psychological impact.

facilitate this, I have focused on a small number of texts which have, in my opinion, made particularly significant contributions to the debate. This should make it easier for the non-specialist to follow the argument as well as allowing more immediate access to some of the relevant literature. The experts may at times feel that I could have pruned the exegesis of others' works, but this is hazardous if one is to get at the underlying assumptions which they make when they string discrete pieces of evidence together. Throughout, as will be seen, I am at pains to show that the assumption which underlies virtually every analysis of caste is a matter of doctrine, not of sociology. If one begins with this assumption—that 'Brahmins are the highest caste'—one will never understand how caste systems work.

Reading 20, 17

2

READING - 10

Dumont's Theory of Caste

Epistemology and Sociology

WITHOUT doubt the single most influential contribution to the study of caste since the end of the Second World War has been Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*.¹ In this chapter a descriptive synopsis of Dumont's position is given while the following chapter presents a critical analysis of his theory. While Dumont has posed the problem in a uniquely penetrating way, there is a fundamental difficulty with his underlying approach to sociological explanation which inevitably renders his solution untenable. The insights to be gained from Dumont's theory come from the questions he asks rather than from the answers he proposes.

The forcefulness of Dumont's argument stems partly from the remarkable epistemological consistency his work has displayed throughout his intellectual development. In order to understand his theory of caste, one might begin with his more recent studies of individualism before reading *Homo Hierarchicus*. This is because there is a thread in his ideas which reaches full maturity in his later work where he becomes increasingly theoretical and philosophical, and where he examines modern ideology in more detail.² The underlying problem is already contained in his work on India but it is often missed or dismissed—as Dumont himself has often been at pains to point out.

Mary Douglas, in her introduction to the first English-language edition of *Homo Hierarchicus*, broached this issue when she formulated Dumont's central concern: 'India is only the ground, the experimental range, for an ambitious exercise in the sociology

¹ Dumont's output on India has been prolific. The essential theory of caste is, however, contained in *Homo Hierarchicus*, particularly since the 1980 publication of the 'Complete Revised English Edition' which, unless otherwise stated, is the edition I will refer to. The 1980 edition contains a new preface in which Dumont replies to his critics, and a 'postscript' entitled 'Toward a theory of hierarchy'. It also contains three appendices which were published in the original French edition but omitted from the first English translation. These appendices, which are reprints of earlier articles, are in fact central to the overall argument.

² See esp. Dumont (1977) and Dumont (1986).

of knowledge. The central problem is the old, familiar one of objectivity' (Douglas 1972: 12). This is where one must begin. Dumont uses India as a *particular illustration* of a much more wide-ranging social philosophy which is intended to illustrate the nature of traditional society generally. Having isolated what it is that makes traditional society, Dumont believes that this can be used as a mirror to explain what it is that makes for the distinctiveness of modern society: this has been his preoccupation since the 1970s.³ However, he also believes that modern Western ideology and traditional ideology are fundamentally incompatible (in a way I shall shortly delineate). The problem, then, is whether one can *validly* make sense of one with the other. If we are prisoners of a historically unique cultural and conceptual framework, how (if at all) can we legitimately analyse other cultures which do not share our framework, our world-view?

Dumont's opening remarks in *Homo Hierarchicus* on the validity of comparative sociology are often glossed over or ignored by those who are in a hurry to get to the ethnography on India. A common attitude among students is that his introduction is at best unoriginal and at worst irrelevant. The charitable opinion is that Dumont is simply establishing his intellectual legitimacy in a French lineage which includes Rousseau, Durkheim, and de Tocqueville. The uncharitable opinion is that his introduction is an unnecessarily long-winded discourse on the philosophical relationship between the individual and society which says nothing new and is a tiresome distraction from the central issue—the study of caste in India. As for professional anthropologists who do not specialize on India, they seem in general to be overwhelmed by the complexity of caste, and leave it well alone.

Homo Hierarchicus, it must be said, is a genuine attempt to bridge the chasm between the specialists and others. However, unless one comes to terms with Dumont's opening salvo about the underlying premises of comparative sociology, the rest of his argument about caste will never fully make sense. Dumont's initial approach may be summed up in the following four propositions which are related in such a way that each makes sense only in terms of the others:⁴

³ There are many similarities between Dumont's project and Weber's: see e.g. D. N. Gellner (1982; 1988).

⁴ These summary propositions are my own distillations of Dumont's argument. The exact quotations will be produced in the course of the argument.

- (a) Traditional society is holistic: modern society is individualistic.
- (b) Because we (moderns) are individualistic, we always perceive hierarchy in terms of inequality: traditional society perceives hierarchy in terms of holism.
- (c) 'The principle of hierarchy is the *attribution* of a rank to each element in relation to the whole' (Dumont 1980: 91; emphasis in original)—this is what 'holism' means.
- (d) In order to understand traditional society, we must transcend our individualistic ideology and embrace the holistic vision. Comparative sociology (anthropology) is impossible without this transcendence.⁵

In the modern West, Dumont argues, inequality is generally perceived as 'exploitation', or 'discrimination', or 'segregation': it is unjust, morally indefensible. This perceived injustice provides us with our primary motivation to explain inequality wherever we find it. It also produces a tendency in sociological theory to reduce ideology to more material factors. Thus ideology (or, to be precise, other people's ideology) is, more commonly than not, perceived as 'superstructure', or as a 'reflection' of some other more fundamental forces, or—the least charitable interpretation of all—as a 'fiction' which masks the 'real' organizational principles of society.⁶ This view of ideology displays in full vigour that the modern mind is most of the time as parochial as the traditional and is generally incapable of escaping its own introverted system of values.⁷

Dumont argues that any evaluation of caste divisions as

⁵ Comparative sociology and anthropology are treated as synonyms by Dumont, a practice which will be followed in this book. Traditionally, there has been a difference in their frames of reference. In so far as sociology has concerned itself with modern industrial society, comparative sociology has, implicitly or explicitly, taken as its central problem the difference between modern society and traditional society. In so far as anthropology is the study of mankind, it has, implicitly or explicitly, taken as its central problem the difference between man and other forms of animal life. 'Comparative sociology' is actually a tautology since sociology is, by its very nature, comparative. However, since this is often not understood, the compound term will be retained to designate sociology which makes the comparative theme explicit.

⁶ For an appraisal of this kind of reductionism, see Croné (1969: 137–43).

⁷ See Dumont (1980: 3). 'Another way of remaining shut in on ourselves consists in assuming from the outset that ideas, beliefs and values—in a word, ideology—have a secondary place in social life, and can be explained by, or reduced to, other aspects of society.'

iniquitous is inappropriate because it introduces a concept of individualism which is foreign to the traditional Indian world-view.⁸ The orientation of caste ideology is to the whole, not to the individual, and we cannot imperialistically impose our values on theirs. Traditional societies like caste India are, of course, hierarchical, but much more revealing is that they make a virtue out of being hierarchical. According to Dumont,

Our task is to make possible the intellectual transition from one ideology to the other, and this we can do through the inclusion in our comparison of the non-ideological residue, which is revealed through comparison, and through comparison only. (Dumont 1977: 18)

In order to make this transition possible, we must know exactly how we are constrained by our own ideology: 'to isolate our ideology is a *sine qua non* for transcending it . . . otherwise we remain caught within it as our very medium of thought' (ibid.: 27). In other words, having isolated our ideology from others and having demonstrated that it is uniquely individualistic, we must somehow transcend it. The barrier to understanding other (holistic) ideologies is being caught within our own individualistic world-view, so that barrier must be raised.

Where and how does the holistic character of traditional society manifest itself? According to Dumont, one must look at values because: 'a certain consensus of values, a certain hierarchy of ideas, things and people is indispensable to social life' (Dumont 1980: 20). Holism and hierarchy are thus defined in terms of each other:

So we shall define hierarchy as the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole, it being understood that in the majority of societies it is religion which provides the view of the whole, and that the ranking will thus be religious in nature. (ibid.: 66, emphasis in original)

In other words, in order to understand any particular traditional society, one must understand its system of values in the holistic fashion that this system is conceived by the people themselves.

Dumont is not saying that traditional societies are holistic, full stop: that Western society is individualistic, full stop. What he is arguing is that the two types of society differ in their ultimate

⁸ Here one might cite in particular the work of Berreman: see his (1979) *Caste and Other Inequities: Essays on Inequality*.

values. In the final analysis, traditional ideology places the highest moral value on the idea of society: modern ideology places the highest moral value on the idea of the individual.⁹

The Distinctiveness of Caste

Let us now move on from these opening considerations of Dumont's on the way in which we must proceed in order to understand traditional society in general. Using the particular example of caste India, he shows how this approach is to be implemented. To the initial four propositions, which deal with the nature and method of sociological inquiry, can now be added two further propositions which distinguish the Indian case. These are:

- (e) The principle of hierarchy in 'the caste system' is the opposition of the pure and the impure: 'superiority and superior purity are identical: it is in this sense that, ideologically, distinction of purity is the foundation of status' (Dumont 1980: 56).¹⁰
- (f) 'The fundamental characteristic of the caste system for comparison [is] the hierarchical disjunction between status and power' (ibid.: 232).

Let us take each of these principles in turn.

The principle of hierarchy in 'the caste system' is the opposition of the pure and the impure. Dumont begins by recalling the three essential characteristics of 'the caste system' set out by Célestin Bouglé in his book *Essais sur le régime des castes* (first published in 1908). These features are separation, interdependence, and hierarchy: separation in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect; interdependence such that each group has in theory, or by tradition, a profession from which its members can depart only within certain limits; hierarchy which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another.

⁹ In *From Mandeville to Marx* (1977) (the French edition was more revealingly entitled *Homo Aequalis*), Dumont maps out the progress of the transition from traditional to modern ideology through the eyes of the philosophers and economic historians who first became aware of it. The argument is, of course, extremely problematic—see e.g. Macfarlane's (1978) hypothesis on the prevalence of individualism in pre-modern England.

¹⁰ As noted in Ch. 1, it is more accurate to speak of the *varna* system (singular) and caste systems (plural).

Building on Bouglé, Dumont insists that these three principles are reducible to a 'single true principle'—namely, the opposition of the pure and the impure. He explicitly states that the fundamental opposition of pure and impure is not the *cause* of all the distinctions of caste, but rather that it is their *form* (1980: 45). It is the idiom through which Hindus understand their own society:

I do not claim that the opposition between pure and impure is the 'foundation' of society except in the intellectual sense of the term: it is by implicit reference to this opposition that the society of castes appears consistent and rational to those who live in it. In my opinion that fact is central, nothing more. (ibid.: 44)

But is it merely a question of form? A few pages later, Dumont would appear to say something rather different: 'The opposition of pure and impure appears to us the very principle of hierarchy, to such a degree that it merges with the opposition of superior and inferior: moreover it also governs separation' (ibid.: 59; emphasis mine). Here it would seem that the opposition of pure and impure is not simply the way in which caste is rationalized, internalized by those who practise it; it is the way in which caste is *shaped*. It is not simply that people understand their relations with others in terms of relative purity; they *act* in accordance with that understanding. But Dumont's point about causality here has a different emphasis: while the oppositional principle of pure and impure is ideologically pre-eminent, the existence of this principle itself depends on something else. It depends on what he calls the disjunction between status and power and he is undoubtedly correct to claim that: 'It is, as always, the relation between the ideological and empirical aspects which is at stake' (ibid.: 45).

The fundamental characteristic of the caste system for comparison is the hierarchical disjunction between status and power. This is really the central issue in Dumont's theory of caste, and the most hotly contested. According to Dumont, the opposition between pure and impure is sustained by the disjunction between ritual status and secular power which characterizes Hindu society. His argument is this: within 'the caste system' there are two competing sources of authority—the spiritual authority of the Brāhmanas, and the temporal authority of the kings (more prosaically, the power-holders or, at the local level, the politically dominant caste). In the ideology of caste, he argues, temporal authority is subordinated to, encompassed by, spiritual authority.

Dumont claims that this disjunction of power and status is *implicit* in the hierarchical opposition of pure and impure: 'Thus in the theory of the varnas one finds that status and power are differentiated, just as the general consideration of hierarchy seemed to require' (ibid.: 72). And again, 'the existence of the theory of the pure and the impure presupposes at least the relationship established in the varnas between priesthood and royalty' (ibid.: 74). This formulation, that the disjunction of status and power is *required* by the opposition of pure and impure, allows Dumont to fend off those who claim that much of the evidence about caste suggests otherwise. He himself agrees that the observable facts do indeed contradict the theory: 'In theory, power is ultimately subordinate to priesthood, whereas in fact priesthood submits to power' (ibid.: 71–2). There is, he says, a 'confrontation of ideology with observation' (ibid.: 77). But he has no doubt as to where one should stand on this confrontation:

first we shall be concerned with the ideology, which easily accounts for the overall framework; secondly, finding the concrete factor, power, in the 'middle zone', a factor not immediately accounted for by the theory of purity, we shall consider it in its turn. (ibid.: 76)

If the observable facts can be brushed aside so easily in this manner, what exactly is the empirical content of Dumont's claim? His position on the disjunction between power and status is set out most clearly in an earlier article entitled 'The Conception of Kingship in Ancient India', which is reprinted as an appendix in *Homo Hierarchicus*.¹¹ The first point made here is that in most of the traditional societies where kingship is found, it has a magico-religious character as well as a political character. In the later Vedic texts known as the Brāhmanas, however, 'the Brahmins' were claiming that they had a monopoly over the entire realm of religion—that is, not only over the performance of ritual, but over the entire domain of moral and spiritual values.¹² As a corollary of this, those who were politically powerful—in shorthand, the

¹¹ Dumont (1962), and reprinted in Dumont (1970) and Dumont (1980).

¹² Dumont (1980: 67, 72). I have put 'the Brahmins' in inverted commas because this label confuses two very different concepts which must always be separated if one is to understand caste—*varna*, i.e. function (*brāhman*), and *jāti*, i.e. caste or kinship group (*brāhmin*). It would be pedantic to include inverted commas every time Dumont uses this expression. Instead I will simply omit the diacritics, as Dumont does, whenever I want to show that the usage is his. The distinction between Brāhman and brāhmin is discussed fully in Cn. 4.

kings—were to have no brief whatsoever in the matter of moral values; they were to confine themselves to purely secular affairs: 'the king has lost his religious prerogatives . . . power in India became secular at a very early date' (ibid.: 71, 76).

Dumont's theory of caste is an attempt to answer one question: how and why do Brahmans enjoy a monopoly on the religious domain? Or conversely, why is it that those who are politically and economically powerful allow them to enjoy this privilege? Historically and conceptually, this alleged monopoly is the basis of what Dumont considers the essential feature of the caste system—the disjunction between status and power. To answer how and why this state of affairs came about, he proposes a theory, one which seems to fit with the evidence he produces but, much more importantly perhaps, one which fits very nicely with his general theory of the nature of traditional society. It is a kind of contract theory and it is beautifully simple.

Somewhere in Indian history, Dumont argues (it is not clear exactly when but it must be before the texts called the *Brāhmaṇas* were written, since in these it is presented as a *fait accompli*), the Aryan kings made a contract with their priests, the Brahmans. Thenceforth Brahmans would not only do as before—namely, perform fire sacrifices to the gods and recite the long ritualistic formulae for which they were famous—but would assume exclusive responsibility for the entire 'magico-religious' domain:

the hierarchical disjunction in question has seemed to us to provide an explanation, a causal one in this case, of many of the system's features. The decisive step in its historical establishment was probably when the Brahmans were attributed the monopoly of religious functions as against the king. (ibid.: 213)

But why should the kings be so magnanimous? Why should they happily relinquish control over the religious domain when this is, on Dumont's theory, superior to and encompassing of temporal power?

Dumont's answer is that in return for their religious monopoly, three things were to be expected of the Brahmans. The first was that they would guarantee the spiritual welfare of their political masters. They were to serve as personal priests (*purohita*) and perform sacrifices on behalf of their political patrons (*yajamana*). The second condition of the Brahmanic monopoly was that priests

and kings conjointly would stand above the rest of society. While the Brahmans, as religious specialists, would naturally consider themselves religiously superior, the kings insisted on being accorded second place in the social hierarchy. In submitting to priesthood, says Dumont, royalty shares in it (ibid.: 72). The king *must* be given second place or 'his dignity and the usefulness of his function' would be denied altogether (ibid.: 77).

The third condition was that the priests would guarantee the transcendental purity of values (Sanskrit: *dharma*). By making the magico-religious function the unique preserve of a specialized class (the Brahmans), whose sole duty in life was to protect and glorify it, *dharma* (duty, order, morality) could be seen to stand unequivocally apart from the treacherously impermanent world of *artha*—instrumentality, wheeling and dealing, profit and loss, conquest and subordination. The Brahmanic guardianship of the religious domain would render it permanent, transcendent, the ultimate source of unquestionable authority.¹³

The fact that there are many different Brahman castes which are associated with different traditional functions and do not intermarry is a problem which is not broached by Dumont in any detail.¹⁴ For him, the essential feature to note is that the Brahmanic status, in general, is the fount of the hierarchical principle of purity—impurity. More precisely, this principle springs from the contrast between Brahmans and Untouchables:

It is generally agreed that the opposition is manifested in some macroscopic form in the contrast between the two extreme categories: Brahmans and Untouchables. The Brahmans, being in principle priests, occupy the supreme rank with respect to the whole set of castes. (ibid.: 47)

The rest of humanity is not, of course, one undivided mass. It has already been pointed out that the kings, the politically powerful, should stand together with the Brahmans above the rest of society. Since the priests ultimately depend on the material support of their patrons, these patrons are accorded second rank in the hierarchy.

¹³ Hinduism, of course, has no Bible or Koran, nor had it any Prophet or Son of God, to provide 'The Truth'. Instead there is a multitude of texts from which one can find justification for just about any philosophy one chooses—including atheism and anti-casteism. In a sense, it is misleading to speak of Hinduism as a single religion at all—see e.g. Potter (1989).

¹⁴ See e.g. Dumont (1980: 356–7, fn. 24 f.).

Other ranks in the society are divided according to the hierarchical principle of purity and impurity—with impurity being defined by Dumont as the irruption of the natural world into the social world and the contamination of the latter by the former. Those who deal professionally with natural, impure substances—e.g. faeces, dead bodies, menstrual blood, cut hair etc.—are designated the lowest position: 'the elementary and universal foundation of impurity is in the organic aspects of human life and from this the impurity of certain specialists (washerman, barber . . .) is directly derived' (ibid.: 55). It is axiomatic for Dumont's theory that the rest of society—those who are neither specialists in purity nor specialists in impurity—can be ranked along the pure-impure axis which has Brahmins at one end and Untouchables at the other: 'Note that so far superiority and superior purity are identical; it is in this sense that ideologically, distinction of purity is the foundation of status' (ibid.: 56). The actual criteria of purity are, however, various—for example tolerance of widow remarriage, or diet (which can always be manipulated to set one's own group apart)—and this quickly generates a complicated system of ranked groups. Using whichever criteria are to its own advantage, each group can find others who are inferior. The process of differentiation is potentially capable of infinite extension and refraction.

Status, Power, and Encompassment

Dumont's theory of caste has certain virtues. It is simple, elegant, and internally consistent. It also accords with certain ancient Hindu texts and Dumont believes this gives it historical authenticity. He maintains that it explains the feature of caste society which outsiders find most problematic—the fact that those who are the most powerful politically and economically do not necessarily enjoy the highest status, while those who do enjoy the highest status (the Brahmins) may be poor and have little political clout.

For Dumont, the distinguishing feature of caste society is that status is superior to, and encompasses, power. What does Dumont mean by 'encompassment'?

As the mantle of Our Lady of Mercy shelters sinners of every kind in its voluminous folds, so the hierarchy of purity cloaks, among other

differences, its own contrary. Here we have an example of the complementarity between that which encompasses and that which is encompassed, a complementarity which may seem a contradiction to the observer. (ibid.: 78)

The underlying idea here can be interpreted as a restatement of Durkheim's central argument in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915): in order for society to be possible, there must be some shared system of values, a *conscience collective*. This is a universal necessity of human society, an *a priori* sociological truth.

In our society, Dumont says, the encompassing nature of individualism inevitably leads us to conceptualize social relations in terms of that which most threatens our individualistic values—namely political and economic power. This is because inequalities of power habitually, inexorably, establish inequalities of status—that is, differences in the relative values of individuals. For us moderns, whatever the historical reasons for the emergence of our ideology, such relative evaluation of individuals has become increasingly unacceptable. Our obsession with inequalities of wealth and power stems directly from our obsession with equality of status.

India, and traditional society generally, argues Dumont, has a quite different obsession. It is not concerned with maintaining an equality of status among individuals; it is concerned with maintaining itself. The idea of society (of holism) is more highly valued than the idea of individualism because individualism is of the essence schismatic. In caste society, says Dumont, what gives 'the system' its rationale, what provides an overall, encompassing framework for ordering all social relations, is the opposition of the pure and the impure: 'The whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical coexistence of the two opposites. One could speak of a "synthetic *a priori*" opposition' (ibid.: 43; emphasis in original).¹⁵

The Structuralist Interpretation of Caste

So far I have given the skeleton of Dumont's theory of caste, his theory of traditional society, and the philosophy of sociological

¹⁵ There is a more abstract formulation of the notions of hierarchy and encompassment in Dumont's (1980) 'Postface' to *Homo Hierarchicus* (pp. 239–45). See also N. J. Allen's (1985) discussion.

knowledge on which these are premised. There is one further aspect of his study of India which must be considered and this is his methodological approach. Having determined the true nature and function of caste, what prescriptions does Dumont give for investigating it? His answer is that one must look at caste in structuralist terms, that is, in terms of relations, and the logic of those relations. One must be especially careful not to 'substantialize' caste, to conceptualize 'the caste system' as an aggregate of so many 'castes' divided into so many 'sub-castes'. This, argues Dumont, is a 'substantialist fallacy': caste does not work like this. The argument can be summarized in a seventh, and final, proposition:

- (g) The structure of the caste system is to be found in the relations between the elements, not in the 'substantialist' nature of the elements themselves.

My own view is that this structuralist approach to caste is as uniquely penetrating as it is poorly understood.¹⁶ Indeed my subsequent argument will be that Dumont does not fully understand its consequences himself and that the rest of his theory actually weakens the structuralist interpretation he advocates. First, however, it is necessary to elaborate a little on what Dumont means by structuralism.

in the middle region [of 'the caste system'] in particular it is often difficult to rank one of two given castes absolutely in relation to the other. Happily, things change if one considers the principles whereby the castes are ranked in a more or less exact order. Underlying this order is found a system of oppositions, a structure . . . We shall speak of structure exclusively in this case, when the interdependence of the elements of a system is so great that they disappear without residue if an inventory is made of the relations between them: a system of relations, in short, not a system of elements. (Dumont 1980: 39-40)

There is, then, no general agreement on the order of castes, but everyone felicitously agrees that there ought to be *some* order.¹⁷ So what is the *principle* which underlies that belief? That principle, says Dumont, is the oppositional idiom in which differences of

¹⁶ As Dumont acknowledges (1980: 41), his structuralist interpretation owes a great deal to Evans-Pritchard's (1940) study of the segmentary nature of Nuer kinship and political organization.

¹⁷ Note the implication that all castes must be ranked in a more or less exact order. This is something I will dispute later.

status are expressed—namely, purity and impurity. It is this simple opposition which structures relations between all 'castes'. Because of the fact that there is a 'multiplicity of concrete criteria' for evaluating purity and impurity, it is not always clear who is higher and who is lower but the principle itself is indisputable (ibid.: 57).

This raises an immediate problem. I have pointed out what Dumont calls the 'substantialist fallacy'—namely, the tendency to consider 'castes' as concrete, discrete groups. Yet, in the preceding argument, Dumont appears to be doing precisely the same thing himself: '... the principles whereby the castes are ranked in a more or less exact order' (emphasis mine). The question of whether or not castes are real 'substantial' groups is never fully clarified by Dumont—which is unfortunate because a great deal depends on the resolution of this problem.

On the one hand, Dumont wants to dismiss the common dichotomy of caste and sub-caste by insisting that this is always a relative matter. Among others, he cites in admiration Ketkar, Blunt, O'Malley, Ghurye, and Mayer¹⁸ in support of the structuralist idea that there is no privileged level at which groups called castes exist:

it is useless to claim to make a choice of level in order to define the 'real group' . . . seen from the outside, from the overall point of view, or from that of another caste, it is the caste which appears; seen from the inside, it is segmented at least into subcastes and, in practice, into territorial fragments of the subcaste. The diverse characteristics of the caste are not borne by a 'group' at a unique level but by groups at different levels of segmentation. (ibid.: 63)

It is only our modern empiricism, he argues, which propels us to seek out and find bounded units—things with 'substance'.

What we ought to be looking for, Dumont insists, are the underlying principles which are not dependent on context—for structure, not substance:

Substantially, we reduce everything to a single plane of consideration: the individual man, or the nation, or the caste. Structurally, the caste appears in certain situations and disappears in others in favour of larger or smaller entities. Here there is not, as in our universe of the individual, a privileged level. In particular, we shall see that the various properties of caste are attached to different levels of the phenomenon. (ibid.: 42)

¹⁸ Ketkar 1909; Blunt 1931; O'Malley 1932; Ghurye 1932, 1950; Mayer 1960.

What exactly any particular group looks like is something which Dumont does not go into in any detail. Indeed he makes a virtue out of this, insisting that one must distinguish 'between theory and practice, between ideology and that which is yielded by observation, without sacrificing one to the other' (ibid.: 64).

As we have seen, however, Dumont is not entirely consistent in his exhortation to avoid the substantialization of castes. The need to confront the facts presented in various census and ethnographic reports raises the problem of what to call the various groups which they identify as castes and sub-castes. In a rather convoluted footnote, Dumont first implicitly endorses the use of the terms 'caste' and 'subcaste', then says that the 'real group' is something else, something which is produced (It is not clear how) by 'the territorial factor':

We can agree with Mayer [1960] in saying, roughly, that relations within the village are relations between different castes (except for relations within the local group of the subcaste, which are agnatic relations in this case), whereas relations within the caste are always relations within the subcaste (except for rare relations between different subcastes of the same caste), and unite people from several villages. In one passage (p. 9) Mayer, interpreting Blunt, seems to say that caste and subcaste, having different attributes, are groups of different kinds. Actually these attributes, some external, the others internal, are complementary. I would rather say that there are not two groups, but that the 'real group' which some have sought to discover is constituted by the complicated configuration of the 'caste', the 'subcaste' (etc.), as qualified by the territorial factor. I am not a member of two different groups, I am a member of one complex group which has different aspects and functions at different levels. (ibid.: 361, fn. 26d)

That the complex question of the constitution of 'real groups' is never settled by Dumont should not be taken as an oversight: the 'territorial factor', as he calls it, is an 'empirical' fact and, as such, is secondary. For Dumont, the study of caste is the study of ideology and here 'the ideology ignores territory as such' (ibid.: 154).

The question of the sense in which bounded, substantial 'castes' can be said to exist or not, and under which circumstances, will be discussed again later.¹⁹ For the moment, we may note only that

¹⁹ See Ch. 5 below.

Dumont has made a singularly important contribution to our understanding of the principle of caste in insisting on its quintessentially relational nature. It is the difficulty of defining what a caste is in isolation, of establishing its boundaries, which leads Dumont to look at the system as a whole, and the way in which this system is structured. This is a crucial advance on the majority of rival explanations.

Dumont's View of Empiricism

Either power must be accommodated within the theory of caste, as here, or else the theory of caste must be brought under the notion of power and 'politico-economic' relations . . . It is a matter of approach: at the empirical level, territory effectively encompasses the castes, as will be recalled shortly; at the conceptual level, representations or ideas encompass what is not directly represented, as we have tried to make clear. The fact remains that the empirical approach is a misconstruction of Indian civilization: it amounts to assimilating *dharma* to *artha* . . . (Dumont 1980: 388, fn. 71a)

What exactly does Dumont mean in this quotation? Who is he chastising and what sin have they committed? He is chastising those who see caste as an ideological distortion, a ritual idiom which obscures the 'real' forces which shape society—those of power and economics (it being agreed by both sides to the dispute that in traditional India political power and economic superiority are effectively the same thing, a question of control over land). His argument is that this reductionism on the part of the economic determinists (those who assimilate *dharma* to *artha*) is specious because of the disjunction of status and power. The fact that Brahmans are everywhere superior in status though often materially dependent makes nonsense of the theory that status follows on from power and can therefore be explained in terms of it.

As an illustration of the position he is attacking, Dumont quotes F. G. Bailey who argues that there is a general correspondence between wealth and political power on the one hand and caste ranking on the other:

But the correlation is not perfect, since at each end of the scale there is a peculiar rigidity in the system of caste . . . in between these two extremes,

ritual rank tends to follow their economic rank in the village community. (Bailey 1957: 266-7, quoted in Dumont 1980: 76; emphasis added by Dumont)

Dumont pours scorn on Bailey's characterization of the rigidity of the poles as 'peculiar'. On the contrary, he argues, it is the very feature of caste which encapsulates the logic of the whole system. This can only be grasped, he insists, by focusing on ideology rather than concrete manifestations of power because 'by keeping to the level of power, one is prevented from understanding the essential characteristic of the Indian system. This characteristic is the subordination of power' (Dumont 1980: 76).

'[A:] the empirical level, territory effectively encompasses the castes . . .'. Here, Dumont is taking a slightly different swipe at the purveyors of *Realpolitik*. When one looks at caste on the ground, what one sees is a number of groups of different status who interact in a more or less restricted locality. Not very far away, the configuration may be slightly different: some groups may be missing, others present; some of the groups may have a different status in one locality than in another; groups with the same ritual function may be known by different names and/or refuse to recognize each other as status equals; perhaps they will even speak different languages or perform their rituals differently; they may have different forms of dress, jewellery, or architecture. In a society where the vast majority are peasants, local affiliations are extremely important.

Dumont does not at all deny the significance of the variations in social organization according to territory. The way that caste is articulated in one territory may not be (is frequently not) exactly the same as in another. But this is, for him, simply a matter of empirical variation. The underlying principle, the opposition of the pure and the impure, is the invariable structuring basis of caste society. The solution to understanding caste, he insists, cannot be found by looking at any particular local hierarchy. It is the very *idea* of hierarchy which is the fundamental unitary theme. In other traditional societies this may be expressed in a variety of ways: in Hindu society, argues Dumont, hierarchy is always at bottom expressed in terms of purity and impurity. This opposition encompasses rival expressions of hierarchy such as those phrased in terms of inequalities of power.

Dumont's Critique of His Critics

Dumont's theory of caste has been attacked from so many different directions that it is difficult to know where to begin—except perhaps with the observation that not one single criticism has caused him to alter his perspective. He has gone to great lengths to clear up misunderstandings of his theory but one is never left with the impression that he is trying to wriggle out of an earlier position. Dumont is convinced that he is right, that his critics generally only half-understand what he is saying and that their alternative explanations of caste are at best partial and at worst completely beside the point.

Dumont believes that his theory of caste has two advantages over its rivals. The first is that it is consistent. The second is its explanatory power: if some facts appear to contradict the theory, this is only because one has not grasped the underlying principle. Dumont has not only been consistent about his own theory; he has been consistent in his view of the alternatives on offer.²⁰ Totally undisturbed by his critics, Dumont's evaluation of them in the preface to the 1980 edition of *Homo Hierarchicus* is very similar to the sentiments he expressed more than twenty years earlier when the book was first published. Then, reviewing the contributions of others who had had carried out intensive fieldwork in the sub-continent since 1945, he remarked:

... direct observation does not put an end to views which are Westernistic, atomistic, materialistic, behaviouristic, and which lead, for example, to the confusion between caste and racism . . . [The] chief manifestations [of this] are: the reduction of the religious to the non-religious; the tendency to take the part for the whole, either the caste instead of the system, or one aspect (separation or hierarchy) instead of all the aspects together; finally and especially at this time, the under-estimation or the reduction of hierarchy, the failure to consider it or the incapacity to understand it . . . this is the stumbling block, the main

²⁰ Some idea of the range of disputes spawned by Dumont's work can be gleaned from two sets of collected papers: *Journal of Asian Studies* (1976, XXXV, No. 4) and T. N. Madan *et al.* (1971). See also Dumont (1980: 340, fn. 6) for a further list and the 1980 preface of *Homo Hierarchicus* for his own evaluation of his critics.

obstacle to the understanding of the caste system. (Dumont 1980: 32; emphasis in original)

Without denying the validity of this criticism, I will argue in the following chapter that Dumont's own approach to caste produces an equally obstructive stumbling block.

3

The Problem with Dumont's Solution

Why the Problem is not Simply about Caste

THE argument in this chapter will be that Dumont has misunderstood the relationship between status and power in Hindu society. From the viewpoint of Brahmanic ideology, these are indeed necessarily disjoined; from the viewpoint of comparative sociology, however, they are necessarily *conjoined*. Dumont's error springs from one misconception concerning the nature of comparative sociology and another concerning the nature of power. This is clear from the very introduction to *Homo Hierarchicus*.

Dumont may be correct that the alternatives to his theory, both before and since, are at best partial explanations. But his own partiality produces a more intractable difficulty: it prevents him from considering evidence which appears to contradict his theory and thus, naturally, from considering alternative explanations of that evidence.

In Dumont's eyes, certain elements of his theory are empirically demonstrable (e.g. that the ideology is pre-eminently articulated in terms of purity-impurity), while the theory as a whole appears to be perfectly consistent. Thus any elements of his theory which are not demonstrably true should, nevertheless, be true by extension. This is Dumont's last line of defence from which, to his own satisfaction at least, he effectively disarms his critics. Contradictory evidence—for example, that power does not in fact submit to status—is always explained away as an obscuration of the 'true' underlying principle.

The first objection one might make to this argument is that theories which have no *possible* counter-examples can only be vacuous.¹ While there has been immense debate among philo-

¹ Karl Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963) is often regarded as the seminal work on this issue. See also E. Gellner's *Legitimation of Belief* (1974).

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One

Introduction: The Modernity of Caste

In that Country the laws of religion, the laws of the land, and the laws of honour, are all united and consolidated in one, and bind a man eternally to the rules of what is called his caste.

—Edmund Burke

Caste as Fact

When thinking of India it is hard not to think of caste. In comparative sociology and in common parlance alike, caste has become a central symbol for India, indexing it as fundamentally different from other places as well as expressing its essence. A long history of writing—from the grand treatise of the Abbé Dubois to the general anthropology of Louis Dumont; from the piles of statistical and descriptive volumes of British colonial censuses starting in 1872 to the eye-catching headlines of the *New York Times*—has identified caste as the basic form of Indian society. Caste has been seen as omnipresent in Indian history and as one of the major reasons why India has no history, or at least no sense of history. Caste defines the core of Indian tradition, and it is seen today as the major threat to Indian modernity. If we are to understand India properly, and by implication if we are to understand India's other core symbol—Hinduism—we must understand caste, whether we admire or revile it.

In *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote that "Almost everyone who knows anything at all about India has heard of the caste system; almost every outsider and many people in India condemn it or criticize it as a whole." Nehru did not like the caste system any more than he admired the widely heralded "original" foundations of Indian civilization, but even he felt ambivalence about it. Although he noted that caste had resisted "not only the powerful impact of Buddhism and many centuries of Afghan and Mughal rule and the spread of Islam," as also "the strenuous efforts of innumerable Hindu reformers who raised their voices against it," he felt that caste was finally beginning to come undone through the force of basic economic changes. And yet Nehru was not sure what all this change would unleash. "The conflict is between two approaches to the problem of social organisation, which are diametrically opposed to each other: the old Hindu conception of the group being the basic unit of organisation, and the excessive individualism of the West,

emphasizing the individual above the group."² In making this observation, Nehru neatly captured the conceptual contours of most recent debates over caste: he evaluated it in relation to its place as fundamental to Hinduism, as well as in terms of a basic opposition between the individual and the community, an opposition that has provided the bounds of most modern social theory and political imagining. This opposition constitutes the basic limit to most understandings of caste, both in the West and within India itself.

Louis Dumont, the author of the most influential scholarly treatise on caste in the last half of the twentieth century, believed that the West's excessive individualism was the single greatest impediment to the understanding of caste. Dumont began his book, *Homo Hierarchicus*, with a critique of individualism, claiming Marx and Durkheim as his sociological ancestors. For Dumont, "the true function of sociology is . . . to make good the lacuna introduced by the individualistic mentality when it confuses the ideal with the actual. . . . To the self-sufficient individual it [sociology] opposes man as a social being; it considers each man no longer as a particular incarnation of abstract humanity, but as a more or less autonomous point of emergence of a particular collective humanity, of a *society*."³ Dumont based his suspicion of modern individualism on Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy, in which he noted that "individualism . . . disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellow-creatures; and to draw apart with his family and his friends; so that, after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself . . . not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendents, and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back for ever upon himself alone, and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart." Dumont thus began his study of caste in India by placing it at the center of the sociological endeavor, and aligning himself with Tocqueville's critical lament about the rise of the "novel idea" of individualism.⁴

For Dumont it is this same commitment to individualism, even within the sociological space of theorizing the social, that rejects the possibility that hierarchy, the core value behind the caste system, has not only been foundational for most societies but is naturally so. Dumont wrote that "To adopt a value is to introduce hierarchy, and a certain consensus of values, a certain hierarchy of ideas, things and people, is indispensable to social life. . . . No doubt, in the majority of cases, hierarchy will be identified in some way with power, but there is no necessity for this, as the case of India will show. . . . In relation to these more or less necessary requirements of social life, the ideal of equality, even if it is thought superior, is artificial."⁵ Dumont made this point here in the service of a straightforward epistemological assertion, namely, that a Western audience (and as his prose makes clear, he could imagine no other) will misunderstand caste, and hierarchy, because of the modern denial of principles that seem opposed to individualism and equality. But his claims about the ideolog-

ical foundations of hierarchical values in India—that India has always been mired in spiritual and otherworldly concerns—are not only deeply problematic, they are as old as Orientalism itself. For Dumont, caste is seen to express a commitment to social values that the modern world has lost, and it is hard not to read Dumont's scholarship as a peculiar form of modern Western nostalgia, if with a long colonial pedigree. Dumont's faith in a communitarian ideal may have little in common with Nehru's anxiety about the demise of caste, but it asserts the view, largely shared in India as well as in the West, that caste is the sign of India's fundamental religiosity, a marker of India's essential difference from the West and from modernity at large.

This book will ask why it is that caste has become for so many the core symbol of community in India, whereas for others, even in serious critique, caste is still the defining feature of Indian social organization. As we shall see, views of caste differ markedly: from those who see it as a religious system to those who view it as merely social or economic; from those who admire the spiritual foundations of a sacerdotal hierarchy to those who look from below and see the tyranny of Brahmins (all the more insidious because of the ritual mystifications that attend domination); from those who view it as the Indian equivalent of community to those who see it as the primary impediment to community. But an extraordinary range of commentators, from James Mill to Herbert Risley, from Hegel to Weber, from G. S. Ghurye to M. N. Srinivas, from Louis Dumont to McKim Marriott, from E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker to B. R. Ambedkar, from Gandhi to Nehru, among many others who will populate the text that follows, accept that caste—and specifically caste forms of hierarchy, whether valorized or despised—is somehow fundamental to Indian civilization, Indian culture, and Indian tradition.

This book will address this question by suggesting that caste, as we know it today, is not in fact some unchanged survival of ancient India, not some single system that reflects a core civilizational value, not a basic expression of Indian tradition. Rather, I will argue that caste (again, as we know it today) is a modern phenomenon, that it is, specifically, the product of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule. By this I do not mean to imply that it was simply invented by the too clever British, now credited with so many imperial patents that what began as colonial critique has turned into another form of imperial adulation. But I am suggesting that it was under the British that "caste" became a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all "systematizing" India's diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization. This was achieved through an identifiable (if contested) ideological canon as the result of a concrete encounter with colonial modernity during two hundred years of British domination. In short, colonialism made caste what it is today. It produced the conditions that made possible the opening lines of this book, by making caste the central symbol of Indian society. And it did its work well; as Nehru was powerfully aware, there is now no simple

way of wishing it away, no easy way to imagine social forms that would transcend the languages of caste that have become so inscribed in ritual, familial, communal, socioeconomic, political, and public theaters of quotidian life.

In the pages that follow I will trace the career of caste from the medieval kingdoms of southern India to the textual traces of early colonial archives; from the commentaries of an eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary to the enumerative obsessions of the late nineteenth-century census; from the ethnographic writings of colonial administrators and missionaries to those of twentieth-century Indian scholars. I will focus on early colonial efforts to know India well enough to rule it and profit by it, as they brought together the many strands of scientific curiosity, missionary frustration, Orientalist fascination, and administrative concerns with property and taxation in the service of, among other things, colonial governmentality.⁶ I will follow these conjunctural imperatives as they increasingly substituted statistical and ethnographical techniques for historical and textual knowledge, as they drew from an ample inheritance of Orientalist generalization to articulate the justifications for permanent colonial rule, and as they took on the racialized languages and conceits of late nineteenth-century imperial world systems. And I will illustrate some of the ways in which this history provided the frame for an alternative history of social reform and nationalist resistance which worked to throw out colonialism while absorbing from colonial encounters many of the terms and arguments of self-determination and self-government. I will also survey the rise of caste politics in the twentieth century, focusing in particular on the emergence of movements that threatened to fracture nationalist consensus even as they revealed the problematic charters, and entailments, of anticolonial nationalism. For the purposes of this book, this history will attain its apotheosis in the debates over the use of caste for social welfare in the postindependence contexts of "reservations," quotas, and affirmative action.

Specters of Caste

It is impossible to write about India today, particularly when addressing issues concerning community, without referring to the current crisis over secularism and religious nationalism. The rise of Hindu fundamentalism has made it necessary to engage explicitly with the ways that Hinduism, as a set of ritual practices, a "world religion," and an ethnic identity, has increasingly claimed India as its own. The uses of *Hindutva* as a political call to arms, and the demise of secularism as a legitimate national ideology, have led to a crisis that might make a book on caste seem beside the point. But it is in part because of the crisis around communalism that it is well worth directing some attention to the ways in which caste haunts discourses of community and nation in India today. This study will perforce address a range of concerns relevant to the

current crisis. First, there is now general acceptance of the fact that the bitter debates over caste reservations were triggered by the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report by V. P. Singh in 1990. Once caste started to be used as the basis for denying rather than conferring social privilege, Hindu nationalists captured ground by calling for a notion of religious community to replace one of caste. Second, one of my arguments in this book will be that caste was configured as an encompassing Indian social system in direct relationship to the constitution of "Hinduism" as a systematic, confessional, all-embracing religious identity. Indeed, caste has generally been seen as fundamental to Hinduism—a curious irony in a context in which the problems of caste are today being used to justify the necessity of Hinduism as a noncontested form of community to cushion the turmoil of political modernity in India. My examination into the colonial history of caste will complement any investigation of the affiliation of religious identities with political communities in the current geopolitics of South Asia, even as it builds on the important suggestions of Gyanendra Pandey that religious *communalism* was also in large part a colonial construction.⁷

It is not as if the Hindu nationalists, any more than either fundamentalist or secularist reformers in days past, have managed to wish caste away. Caste continues to dominate Indian social worlds, even if in some larger political contexts it has been effaced by the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. In regions of India that witnessed particularly significant anti-Brahman (and by implication anticaste) political movements, as for example in what are today Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, as well as in regions where caste provided the basis for "lower-caste" political mobilization, as for example in parts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, caste seems to be as prominent a fact of social life as ever. Increasingly, all-India forms of Dalit ("untouchable") politics carry on B. R. Ambedkar's insistent identification of caste as the most powerful vehicle of dominance—ritual as well as political and economic—in India. At the same time, the process of what has been called the ethnicization, or substantialization, of caste, heralded by many social scientists as the necessary death of the old caste system (hased as they thought it was on interdependency rather than conflict) has provided new mechanisms for the strengthening of caste identity. Caste may no longer convey a sense of community that confers civilizational identity to the Indian subcontinent, but it is still the primary form of local identity and, in certain contexts, from Dalits to Brahmins, translates the local into recognizably subcontinental idioms of association far more powerful than any other single category of community.

Caste thus continues, even as it continues to trouble. But despite the tone here—and I will be critical of the British role in the reification of caste even as I am critical of those, Indian or Western, who advocate the values of the *caste system*—I do not seek to join the chorus of those who view caste as either emblematic of Indian civilization or as opposed to modernity. Although my

principal concern will be to unravel the historical process that has worked to naturalize the idea of a (uniform, all-encompassing, ideologically consistent, Indologically conceived) caste system. I am particularly concerned to register my conviction that caste has at times been the necessary vehicle of social and political mobilization, even as it carries as many traces of the modern as the institutions it is said to inhibit or oppose. When figures such as Ambedkar in western India or Periyar in the south organized political movements around caste, they worked to transform both the cultural meanings and the political uses of caste in ways that went well beyond the colonial mandate. On occasion, caste has indeed been a worthy synonym of community in the best of senses, even if political movements have all too often failed to transcend in any way the problematic relationship of caste to exclusion. Nehru observed that "In the constructive schemes that we may make, we have to pay attention to the human material we have to deal with, to the background of its thought and urges, and to the environment in which we have to function. To ignore all this and to fashion some idealistic scheme in the air, or merely to think in terms of imitating what others have done elsewhere, would be folly. It becomes desirable therefore to examine and understand the old Indian social structure which has so powerfully influenced our people."⁸ More to my point, since I can share neither Nehru's precise pronouns nor his own political project, leave alone his understanding of caste, I would argue that caste endures and is so significant today because it has been the precipitate of a powerful history, in which it has been constituted as the very condition of the Indian social. This book is principally about the historicity of caste, the ways caste has come into being, and as such been conditioned by history to condition (and make conditional) any possibility of a future beyond, or without, caste.

What follows is principally about the colonial role in the historical construction of caste. I argue that the history in which caste has been constituted as the principal modality of Indian society draws as much from the role of British Orientalists, administrators, and missionaries as it does from Indian reformers, social thinkers, and political actors. Indeed, my argument is about the power of the colonial leviathan to produce caste as the measure of all social things, a feat that could not have been accomplished had caste not become one of the most important emblems of tradition (the not-so-obscure object of desire for many Westerners and Indians alike, across the full course of India's modern history) at the same time as it was a core feature of colonial power/knowledge. And yet this is not a simple story of either epistemic domination or of elite collaboration. This book not only culminates in the heroic attempts by Ambedkar and Periyar to change the terms of caste; it builds on the work of critics of colonial modernity such as Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee, who have been as concerned to chart new historical patterns of influence as they have been to find new ways to chart alternative futures. Guha, whose work has ranged from his brilliant intellectual history of the Bengal Permanent Settle-

ment to his more recent studies of anticolonial insurgency and the manifold historical entailments of colonial domination, has both demonstrated the power of colonial rule and the need to write not just against but beyond colonialism.⁹ And Chatterjee has always insisted on the need to chart the history of colonized negotiations with both the brutality of foreign domination and the spectral hail of the modern. Drawing inspiration from these and many other scholars, I hope to weave an argument far more complicated than that the British invented caste, though in one sense this is precisely what happened. But when I assert the power of colonial history I do so in the wake of the now canonic demonstrations by Bernard Cohn and Edward Said of the hegemonic character of colonial rule on the history of the colonized.¹⁰

We now know that colonial conquest was not just the result of the power of superior arms, military organization, political power, or economic wealth—as important as these things were. Colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened, as much by cultural technologies of rule as it was by the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest that first established power on foreign shores. The cultural effects of colonialism have until recently been too often ignored or displaced into the inevitable logics of modernization and world capitalism; and this only because it has not been sufficiently recognized that colonialism was itself a cultural project of control. Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about. Cultural forms in societies newly classified as "traditional" were reconstructed and transformed by this knowledge, which created new categories and oppositions between colonizers and colonized, European and Asian, modern and traditional, West and East. Through the delineation and reconstitution of systematic grammars for vernacular languages, the control of Indian territory through cartographic technologies and picturesque techniques of rule, the representation of India through the mastery and display of archaeological mementos and ritual texts, the taxing of India through the reclassification and assessment of land use, property form, and agrarian structure, and the enumeration of India through the statistical technology of the census, Britain set in motion transformations every bit as powerful as the better-known consequences of military and economic imperialism.¹¹

Most saliently for the argument here, British colonialism played a critical role in both the identification and the production of Indian "tradition." Current debates about modernity and tradition fail to appreciate the extent to which the congeries of beliefs, customs, practices, and convictions that have been designated as traditional are in fact the complicated byproduct of colonial history. Bernard Cohn has argued that the British simultaneously misrecognized and simplified things Indian, imprisoning the Indian subject into the typecast role it assigned under the name of tradition: "In the conceptual scheme which the British created to understand and to act in India, they constantly followed the

same logic; they reduced vastly complex codes and their associated meanings to a few metonyms. . . . India was redefined by the British to be a place of rules and orders: once the British had defined to their own satisfaction what they construed as Indian rules and customs, then the Indians had to conform to these constructions."¹² Edward Said has illuminated the process through which the Orient was "Orientalized" precisely because of the byzantine reinforcements of colonial power and knowledge.¹³ Partha Chatterjee has called this general process the "colonial rule of difference": referring thereby to the historical fact that colonialism could only justify itself if under the regime of universal history it encountered the limit of alterity, the social fact that India must always be ruled because it could never be folded into a universal narrative of progress, modernity, and, ultimately, Europe. "To the extent this complex of power and knowledge was colonial," he tells us, "the forms of objectification and normalization of the colonized had to reproduce, within the framework of a universal knowledge, the truth of colonial difference."¹⁴

It is here that we come up against the special perversity of colonial modernity, for the traditional was produced precisely within the historical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer held out modernity as a promise but at the same time made it the limiting condition of coloniality: the promise that would never be kept. The colonized could be seduced by the siren of the modern but never quite get there, mired necessarily (if colonialism was to continue to legitimate itself) in a "traditional" world.¹⁵ On the other side of the colonial divide, the colonized, sometimes in direct reaction to the colonial lie of universality, would appropriate tradition as resistance and as refuge, but under conditions of colonial modernity tradition was simultaneously devalued and transformed. As a result, tradition too suffered from loss, even as it was tainted by its evident historicity. In the case of caste, many Indian social reformers and critics mistook this history as linear decline, the degradation of a noble system into a corrupt structure of power and dominant interests. Only a few, most notably the extraordinary sociologist G. S. Ghurye, blamed colonialism.¹⁶ But whatever the argument, attempts at historical recuperation typically took the form of finding an Orientalist golden age: a time when caste was an ideal system of mutual responsibility, reasoned interdependence, and genuine spiritual authority. Only a few non-Brahman and Dalit voices rejected this kind of Orientalist nostalgia, all the while feeling increasingly trapped by the demands of anticolonial nationalism to downplay, and defer, all critiques of Indian culture and civilization.

The Indian Political

Perhaps the most troubling legacy of the colonial idea of a golden age is the disavowal (shared in large part by nationalist thought) of the political forms

and affiliations that were an important part of India's precolonial history. It is this last concern that was the subject of my previous study, *The Hollow Crown*, which took as its focus the social and political fortunes of a small kingdom in southern India from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. I argued that "until the emergence of British colonial rule in southern India [and by implication India at large] the crown was not so hollow as it has generally been made out to be. Kings were not inferior to Brahmins; the political domain was not encompassed by a religious domain. State forms, while not fully assimilated to western categories of the state, were powerful components in Indian Civilization. Indian society, indeed caste itself, was shaped by political struggles and processes."¹⁷ The vital world of political action and community was, in fact, overtaken by colonial rule, and public life became increasingly defined as Western at the same time that the promise of universal modernity became more and more marked in national and racial terms. Meanwhile, public life was emptied of all "traditional" components—as old forms of politics were condemned as feudal and old forms of association rendered atavistic. The permanent Zamindari settlements of Bengal and Madras, and the intractable histories leading to indirect rule of one form or another in one-third of India (leaving princely states "intact"), produced a hollow simulacrum of India's ancient politics. The British maintained in style these kingdoms, which had facilitated colonial conquest, as lavish museums of old India. At the same time, these states were constant reminders of the justifications of British rule: India had been unable to rule itself because its political system was commanded by grand but quarrelling kings who would shamelessly exploit their subjects in order to accumulate unlimited wealth and prestige, and had neither attended to basic principles of justice nor concerned themselves with the formation of organized administration and stable, centralized power. Thus Britain sustained the fiction that it had walked into a vacuum and had conquered India, as the Cambridge imperial historian John Seeley said, "in a fit of absence of mind," after which the British ruled India for the sake of its own subjects, rather than for any gain of their own.¹⁸ This astonishing failure of historical consciousness was, of course, justified through the attribution of a lack of history, and caste was taken as a sign thereof.

These colonial narratives seemed justified by case after case in which landlords and princes would fail to exploit the economic opportunities afforded by permanent settlement and indirect rule; "theater states" grew up all over India in which issues of ceremonial and prestige, hierarchy and protocol, accumulation and expenditure seemed of far greater moment than either sound management or popular representation. A kind of embarrassment set in, I would suggest, in which it became difficult to point to recent history, and the vast estates and quasi-autonomous tracts under royal control, as arguments for national self-confidence—let alone self-rule. In cities like Calcutta, the elite was in large part supported by the profits that came from landlord rights to these same

rural estates; in this environment, recognition of the power of the West became the basis both for what has been called colonial mimicry in areas ranging from political theory to cultural production and for the development of forms of resistance that were justified by the glorious past record of India's civilizational achievement. A new vision, following what by now was an authoritative Orientalist script coauthored in many cases by those who accorded no particular prestige to political authority, celebrated the civilizational and spiritual achievements of old India. This vision did not address the political history of recent times; a conspicuous silence was maintained around the material basis of the vision's own conditions of possibility. In thinking about the efflorescence of current debate around the subject of tradition, it is accordingly necessary to call again for the recuperation of that part of Indian tradition, or history, that had been compromised by the vain pomp, circumstance, and exploitation of colonial feudalism—not to argue return but rather to counter the otherworldliness of colonial fictions about history. It is time again to "tell sad stories of the death of kings: how some have been deposed, some slain in war, some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed.... All murdered."¹⁹

In subsequent chapters I shall say more about kings, and about the Indian political. The point here is to suggest that the death of kings cleared the way for the transformation of caste under colonial rule. Caste was refigured as a distinctly religious system, and the transformation had immense implications for everyday social life. The confinement of caste to the realm of religion enabled colonial procedures of rule through the characterization of India as essentially a place of spiritual harmony and liberation; when the state existed in India, so the argument went, it was despotic and epiphenomenal, extractive but fundamentally irrelevant. British rule could thus be characterized as enlightened when it denied Indian subjects even the minimal rights that constituted the basis for the development of civil society in Europe. Caste itself was seen as a form of colonial civil society in India, which provided an ironic, and inferior, anthropological analogue for the colonized world. In Europe, the rise of new nation-states in the eighteenth century went hand in hand with the construction of a new form of civil society. Civil society was to free individuals in new and progressive societies from "traditional" modes of social organization and from the myriad constraints of premodern and/or feudal politics. Civil society had been constituted by and institutionalized in a range of bodies—the church, educational institutions, civic organizations—that represented the interests of a private domain, interests construed to be autonomous from the state even as they were simultaneously protected by it. The modern state, more powerful than ever before, had legitimated itself in part through its claim to free the social realm from the politics of the past. In India, however, caste was understood always to have resisted political intrusion; it was already a kind of civil society in that it regulated and mediated the private domain,

such as it was. But a society based on caste could not be more different from modern Western society, for caste was opposed to the basic premisses of individualism, and it neither permitted the development of voluntarist or politically malleable social institutions nor worked to reinforce the modern state. Further, caste conferred citizenship only in social and ritual rather than in political contexts, and opposed the ideas of both individual action and social mobilization. According to some, caste actively resisted the modern state even more than it did the old, for the modern state opposed rather than supported the dharmic order of things. At the same time, many British officials were convinced that caste would stand in the way of nationalist mobilization, claiming as it did primordial loyalty from its members.

Under colonialism, caste was thus made out to be far more—far more pervasive, far more totalizing, and far more uniform—than it had ever been before, at the same time that it was defined as a fundamentally religious social order. In fact, however, caste had always been political—it had been shaped in fundamental ways by political struggles and processes; even so, it was not a designation that exhausted the totality of Indian social forms, let alone described their essence. What we take now as caste is, in fact, the precipitate of a history that selected caste as the single and systematic category to name, and thereby contain, the Indian social order. In precolonial India, the units of social identity had been multiple, and their respective relations and trajectories were part of a complex, conjunctural, constantly changing, political world. The referents of social identity were not only heterogeneous; they were also determined by context. Temple communities, territorial groups, lineage segments, family units, royal retinues, warrior subcastes, "little" kingdoms, occupational reference groups, agricultural or trading associations, devotionally conceived networks and sectarian communities, even priestly cabals, were just some of the significant units of identification, all of them at various times far more significant than any uniform metonymy of endogamous "caste" groupings. Caste, or rather some of the things that seem most easily to come under the name of caste, was just one category among many others, one way of organizing and representing identity. Moreover, caste was not a single category or even a single logic of categorization, even for Brahmans, who were the primary beneficiaries of the caste idea. Regional, village, or residential communities, kinship groups, factional parties, chiefly contingents, political affiliations, and so on could both supersede caste as a rubric for identity and reconstitute the ways caste was organized. Within localities, or kingdoms, groups could rise or fall (and in the process become more or less castelike), depending on the fortunes of particular kings, chiefs, warriors, or headmen, even as kings could routinely readjust the social order by royal decree.²⁰

Social identity was importantly political, as too were the contexts in which different units became formed, represented, and mobilized. And politics took on its shape and meaning in relation to local and regional systems of power in

which headmen (of lineages, temples, villages), religious leaders (gurus, leaders of sects and monasteries, saints, priests, muftis, and imams), warriors, chiefs, and kings were figures of central importance, with authority over communities that from certain perspectives could look and act like caste groups. To read and organize social difference and deference—pervasive features of Indian society—solely in terms of caste thus required a striking act of history and studied disregard for ethnographic specificity, as well as a systematic denial of the political mechanisms that selected different kinds of social units as most significant, and as most highly valorized, at different times. Brahmanic texts, both Vedic origin stories for caste and the much later dharma texts of "Manu," provided transregional and metahistorical modes of understanding Indian society that clearly appealed to British colonial interests and attitudes; they also secured for Indians pride of place in a civilizational lexicon of cultural reconstitution, reaffirmation, and resistance. The idea that *varna*—the classification of all castes into four hierarchical orders with the Brahman on top—could conceivably organize the social identities and relations of all Indians across the civilizational expanse of the subcontinent was only developed under the peculiar circumstances of British colonial rule. Hierarchy, in the sense of rank or ordered difference, might have been a pervasive feature of Indian history, but hierarchy in the sense used by Dumont and others became a systematic value only under the sign of the colonial modern.

Caste and the Colonial Modern

The transformations associated with modernity in India were overdetermined by the colonial situation. On the one hand, what was useful for British rule also became available for the uses of many Indians who were recruited to participate in one way or another in the construction of colonial knowledge. On the other hand, new forms of and claims about knowledge, products as they were in large part of early colonial Orientalism and late colonial state practices, could take root only because colonial interventions actively obliterated the political dynamic of colonial society. Ironically, it was the very permeability and dynamism of Indian society that allowed caste to become modern India's appropriation of its traditional being. Under colonial rule caste—now systematic, and systematically disembodied—lived on. In this new form it was appropriated and reconstructed by colonial power. What Orientalist knowledge did most successfully in the Indian context was to assert the precolonial authority of a specifically colonial form of power and representation.

When caste became political again (if, necessarily, in a different sense), whether in response to census classifications at the beginning of the twentieth century or in reaction to the implementation of the Mandal Report at the end, no one should have been surprised. Caste had been political all along, but under colonialism was anchored to the service of a colonial interest in main-

taining social order, justifying colonial power, and sustaining a very particular form of indirect rule. By indirect rule in this context I mean the mechanisms that were used both to buttress and to displace colonial authority. In the early years of colonial rule, these mechanisms were organized principally through "land systems" that were linked to modes of property, agrarian relations, and revenue collection. Zamindars, individual cultivators, and village communities were variably constituted—after long debates over Indian history and colonial policy—as the authentic heirs of precolonial local authority and as primary agents of revenue collection and local order. This was the period when Charles Cornwallis and Philip Francis took their cues from the physiocrats and argued in favor of the resurrection of local lords as a loyal and newly gentrified elite, indebted to British rule and dedicated to improvement; when Thomas Munro made his career by arguing against landlords both because he saw these survivals of older political systems as dangerous and because he was convinced they, unlike the ryots or cultivators whose role he championed, had no actual involvement in agricultural cultivation; and when Charles Metcalfe and Mountstuart Elphinstone established their reputations by identifying and advocating the resilience of the ancient village republic or community, writing histories to justify their position and drafting land policies to demonstrate the wisdom of their views.

As agrarian revenue issues were provisionally resolved, they were at the same time increasingly taken over by other kinds of revenue concerns tied into the diversification of the colonial economy, ranging from changes in international trade, the success and transformation of industrial development in Britain, and the rise of major investments in railways and other infrastructures, to new kinds of world strategic concerns. Thus the crises of early conquest and rule began to give way to other issues of control. This was so particularly in the wake of the Great Rebellion of 1857, after which the Company's ambitions of complete conquest were necessarily curtailed, and the British state assumed "direct" rule. At the very time that Awadhi talukdars were being bought off and other princes and zamindars feted as the ceremonial center of old India, British interest in the institution of caste intensified in very new ways. District-level manuals and gazetteers began to devote whole chapters to the ethnography of caste and custom; imperial surveys made caste into a central object of investigation; and by the time of the first decennial census of 1872, caste had become the primary subject of social classification and knowledge. Although the village continued to be seen as the dominant site of Indian social life, it became understood as more a setting for caste relations than the primary building block of Indian society. By 1901, when the census commissioner H. H. Risley announced his ambition for an ethnographic survey of India, it was clear that caste had attained its colonial apotheosis.

And yet caste was never easily contained, either by spiritual otherworldliness or by Risley's racial empiricism. If caste, like the women's question, became an increasing embarrassment to the nationalist

century, it never disappeared from the politics of the day. An avalanche of petitions to census commissioners over caste status led to the dropping of caste as a census category after 1931, even as caste politics vied significantly with certain forms of nationalism in places such as Bombay and Madras presidencies. Even as temple entry, under Gandhi and many regional leaders, continued to occupy pride of place in certain political agendas, Ambedkar threatened the unity of nationalist purpose by pressing his case for separate electorates for scheduled castes in a heroic struggle with Gandhi in 1932. Caste politics did not interfere with the triumph of the nationalist movement, as did communal strife between Hindus and Muslims in the tragic preemption of Partition, but it returned soon after independence to contest the easy assurances of modernity in the new Nehruvian secular vision of society, both at the national level and once again in regions such as Madras. The sociological assurance that caste would disappear except as a form of domestic ritual or familial identity when it entered the city and new domains of industrial capital turned out to be a bourgeois dream disrupted both by steady reports of escalating caste violence in the countryside and then the turmoil over reservations in the principal cities of the nation. Caste did not die, it did not fade away, and it could no longer be diagnosed as benign. At the same time, caste remains the single most powerful category for reminding the nation of the resilience of poverty, oppression, domination, exclusion, and the social life of privilege. And some of the most eloquent expressions of political community now come in the form of movements that take caste as a primary focus of social mobilization. One could even argue, following recent formulations by Partha Chatterjee, that caste has moved from its place as a colonial substitute for civil society (or, in Chatterjee's terms, the colonial argument for why civil society could not grow in India) to a new position as a specifically postcolonial version of political society.²¹

And so, for better and for worse, caste did replace the crown that came before. If the crown was literally emptied of the political dynamic and authority that characterized precolonial regimes in India's history, caste entered, Athena-like, into the places left behind. Recounting the history of caste, in other words, is one way of narrating the social history of colonialism in India.²² This is a history in which the past itself was colonized, in which the domain of civil society was abandoned to theories about the weight of tradition, in this case the totality represented by the caste system. Caste became the colonial form of civil society; it justified the denial of political rights to Indian subjects (not citizens) and explained the necessity of colonial rule. As India was anthropologized in the colonial interest, a narrative about its social formation, its political capacity, and its civilizational inheritance began increasingly to tell the story of colonial inevitability and of the permanence of British imperial rule. If caste occupied the place of the social and constrained the possibility of the political, colonial rule could consist largely of the enumerative technology

of the census and the ethnographic survey, producing by the late nineteenth century what I call the "ethnographic state." This is not the whole story, of course, for at the very time that caste was consolidated as the primary object of social classification and knowledge, it was appropriated in other ways, as well. And it was also steadily subordinated to the political mobilization around the nationalist movement, which disproved one colonial myth after another. But caste remained, and was in fact recast, in ways that have caused embarrassment and critique and have provided the basis for new forms of social mobilization and progressive politics. Caste has become uniquely Indian, and not always in ways that satisfy either liberal or conservative agendas of national identity.

Caste is a specter that continues to haunt the body politic of postcolonial India. Whether in constitutional claims about the abolition of caste discrimination or in political claims about the formation of the national community, it has become the subject of national shame. In part this is an extension of the "women's question" that emerged so powerfully in relation to social reform debates and movements of the nineteenth century. Most of the issues that attracted the attention of social reformers, from widow burning to prohibitions around widow remarriage and controversies over the age of consent, were embedded within caste protocols and related to caste status. The fundamentally gendered character of caste as an emergent cultural system will only occasionally be remarked in the argument that follows, even as I must note at the outset that many of the most egregious effects of caste have been expressed through gender.²³ Colonial sociology was almost as silent as nationalist sociology about the ways in which caste encoded the treatment and management of women in Indian society; it either assumed the pervasiveness of India's abuse of women or anthropologized the whole set of questions around marriage, reproduction, and the family. In the nationalism of the twentieth century, Gandhi was one of the few major figures to attempt to keep the women's issue alive, if in registers that have attracted considerable dissent. Gandhi's principal amendment to the social reform agenda was, in fact, his plank concerning "harijan uplift," although this too became severely contested as his efforts at compromise and incorporation fell afoul of increasing Dalit mobilization.

Nevertheless, whether in relation to the history of gender, the victimization of Dalits, or the rise of anti-Brahman and backward-caste politics, caste has worked to compromise the easy affiliations of national unity and civilizational history. Caste has become the focus of progressive movements and of debates—both local and national—about the character of postcolonial politics. It has also become the uncomfortable reminder that community is always segmented by class, gender, and region, that the nation might be threatened less by religious difference than by other pervasive grounds of difference; it is a reminder that all claims about community are claims about privilege, participation, and exclusion. Caste has been the site of collisions between patriarchy

and tradition; in its valorization of Brahmanic ideals around the status of women and the general subservience of women to marriage rules and domestic conditions, caste has simultaneously preserved the patriarchy of premodern society and worked to sanction the continued oppression and exclusion of women in nationalist reimaginings of the past. But it has also made it clear that neither Brahmanism nor Hinduism can be the genuine basis for a national community, even as religion itself cannot be sequestered (indeed never has been so sequestered) into a private sphere, whether in traditional or modern terms. And caste haunts all assertions of return to a premodern past, all claims about the glories and values of tradition. Caste may be the precipitate of the modern, but it is still the specter of the past.

Two

Homo Hierarchicus: The Origins of an Idea

In the Beginning

The Portuguese have been credited with the initial use of the term *casta* to refer to the social order of India, although according to at least one source the first use of the word was applied only to the lowest Indian classes in contradistinction to their overlords.¹ In the early sixteenth century, the traveller Duarte Barbosa reported some features of a caste order after extended stays in India, in particular on the basis of his stay in the great kingdom of Vijayanagara. He wrote that there were "three classes of Heathen, each one of which has a very distinct rule of its own, and also their customs differ much one from the other."² The first, and principal, class included the king, "the great Lords, the knights and fighting men." The second class were "Bramenes, who are priests and rulers of their houses of worship."³ Brahmins were accorded a position of respect, and endogamy within caste units was said to be a general custom, as too the application of sanctions within castes to maintain caste discipline. Barbosa expressed no surprise or shock about Indian society, and although he reported the position of Brahmins as exalted and that of untouchables as inferior, he did not mention the varna system of the four ideal caste groups, nor did he moralize about caste one way or the other.⁴ Subsequent European writings about India add little to his account, and frequently comment even less on things like caste. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a French merchant who traveled to India frequently in the middle of the seventeenth-century, reported on the reign of Aurangzeb as well as on commercial relations between India and Europe, and made some mention of Hindu beliefs, rituals, and customs. But caste was barely mentioned, except as the report of the priests who say there are seventy-two castes, though "these may be reduced to four principal [castes], from which all others derive their origin."⁵

The Mughal rulers of India were aware of a formal varna scheme that could be used to encompass in textual terms the entirety of the Indian social order. Abu'l Fazl, the author of the late sixteenth-century gazetteer and administrative codebook of Akbar's court, the *A'in-i-Akbari*, noted that the four varnas—the brahmins or priests, the ksatriyas or warriors, the vaisyas or merchants and agriculturalists, and the sudras or laborers and servants—had been born from the primordial body of Brahma, and that all subsequent subdivisions of caste groupings were due to intermarriage among these four original categories. But

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CHAPTER FIVE

Caste Inequalities in India Today

Seen from the vantage point of the Nehruvian era, the 1980s and 1990s have witnessed what psychoanalysts call 'the return of the repressed'—the reappearance in pathological form of unresolved tensions censored from conscious memory. One such problem, Hindu communalism, was discussed in the last chapter on the spatial strategies of *Hindutva*; caste is another. In a way, the resurgence of the caste question—more specifically, the renewed militancy and social visibility of the so-called lower castes—has been much more of a shock to the largely upper-caste urban middle classes than the revival of *hindutva*.

During the Nehruvian era, the national consensus on caste seemed much more comprehensive and durable than the one on secularism. Caste—unlike religion—was among the few 'traditional' institutions that were presented as all bad, as 'social evils' without any redeeming features. It was as if the only civilized response to caste was to urge its abolition. And in the 1950s and '60s it seemed as though everyone was civilized, for no one argued otherwise. To the generations born in Nehruvian India, and specially to those who (like me) were brought up in a traditionally upper-caste but newly urban and newly professional middle-class environment, caste was an archaic concept. True, it would be brought out of figurative mothballs to preside over traditional rites of passage, specially marriage, but it seemed to have

no active role in urban everyday life.

It is only now—after Mandal, so to speak—that we are beginning to understand why caste was almost invisible in urban middle-class contexts. The most important reason, of course, is that these contexts were overwhelmingly dominated by the upper castes. This homogeneity made caste drop below the threshold of social visibility. If almost everyone around is upper-caste, caste identity is unlikely to be an issue, just as our identity as 'Indians' may be relevant abroad but goes unnoticed in India. Moreover, it was precisely the upper castes who had the least problems in supporting the official and social-moral ban on public discussion of caste in the decades after Independence. Whatever their personal views on the subject, it is reasonable to suppose that as a social group that benefitted from the system, the upper castes would not have been averse to the absence of public debate on caste.

Despite its status as the discipline most concerned with the subject, Indian sociology seems to have done little to account for or to counter the tendency for caste to vanish from view in precisely those contexts where it had been most effective. This chapter attempts, therefore, to pin down a strong yet oddly elusive uneasiness that I have felt about the *partial*—that is to say, incomplete, and therefore also biased—understanding of caste in Indian sociology.

I first recognized this uneasiness for what it was at a crowded upper middle-class Chinese restaurant in Secunderabad. The restaurant was just 'upper' enough to play reggae music and to require that diners wait to be seated, but also 'middle' enough to serve saunf and sugar with the bill. Furious because he felt others had been seated ahead of his own group, a plump middle-aged man in a safari suit was berating the manager in authoritative Indian English. Although he was yelling, I would not have noticed his voice in the general din but for the incongruous northern accent. 'Are we *scheduled castes* or what?' he shouted.

The phrase 'Scheduled Castes' sounds appropriately quaint in Anglo-American English, specially if one recounts its colonial origins

in the Government of India Act of 1935, which required the preparation of Schedules listing the castes and tribes forming the 'Depressed Classes'. But as is well known, the phrase is used as a single word in Indian English, a common noun without capital, and that is how the man used it. And everyone understood him perfectly well—the hapless manager, the rival group that he suspected of usurping his table, his own companions, even bystanders like myself.

What made me uneasy was my gut feeling that being a sociologist had placed me at a *disadvantage* vis-à-vis the other bystanders in interpreting this incident. My discipline did not offer much help in figuring out what caste means in places like a big-city Chinese restaurant, or for people who wear safari suits. Instead, it pointed me towards villages, religious beliefs about purity and pollution, ritual rules and customs about food and marriage . . . I do not mean to suggest that these are the wrong directions—far from it. But these are not the *only*—or perhaps even the most crucial—locations where caste has been flourishing in independent India, unmindful of its legal abolition half a century ago.

A popular series of advertisements asks us to think of a particular paint company whenever we see colour; whenever we think of caste, Indian sociology seems to invite us to 'see' villages, rituals, rites and so on. This is a true but partial view that risks becoming untrue because it is unaware (or insufficiently aware) of its partiality. It is of this risk that the safari-suited gentleman reminds us by demonstrating that caste is alive and kicking in the urban middle-class, and has had a thoroughly modern makeover. He may no longer remember caste names or care about the caste of the cooks in the restaurant, he may never have set foot in a village. But Mr Safari suit knows who 'scheduled castes' are, how they are to be treated, and why people like himself are infinitely superior—in short, he knows everything a 'user' needs to know about caste.

Caste as seen from sociology: what is missing?

Today, a decade after the bitter controversy over the Mandal

Commission report, we may be better placed to appreciate the irony in the fact that this controversy offered us—albeit by accident—a rare window of insight into Indian sociology. Given the centrality of caste, an undeniably 'sociological' subject, one would normally have expected the discipline to shed light on the controversy rather than the other way around. Of course, such expectations were not entirely belied. But while some sociologists did gain rare public attention for their comments, the discipline itself gained little in prestige and authority.

This was not because sociologists adopted unpopular stances. In fact, the most prominent among them were vocal in their support for the anti-Mandal position which dominated urban middle-class perceptions of this issue and received wide and strongly sympathetic coverage in the metropolitan media. But, by and large, sociologists were unable to say anything that went beyond popular commonsense.

In this respect they were no different from the journalists, politicians, administrators, other academics or legions of self-proclaimed pundits commenting on the subject. Like everyone else, sociologists too concentrated on the *possible consequences of implementing the Mandal Report*. Forgotten were the questions that ought to have come first, at least for a discipline claiming specialized knowledge of caste as a social institution: *Is caste discrimination still practised in contemporary India? Does it continue to breed inequality? What is the nature and extent of such inequality today? How has it been changing since independence?*

It may seem painfully obvious that problems must be discussed before solutions are debated, but exactly the opposite seems to have happened during the Mandal controversy. What is most remarkable, however, is that sociologists should have shared in and helped accentuate such a perverse response. By addressing crucial questions which the overnight experts were unable to answer, sociologists could have demonstrated that their discipline provides insights that commonsense cannot. But it seems in retrospect that the sociologists' silence on questions of caste inequality was not so much perverse as

prudent. As a matter of fact, despite all its claims to an expertise on caste, Indian sociology did not have the answers, never having shown much interest in macro-analyses of caste inequality. The important point, though, is that this lack of interest was itself invisible because it was so much a part of business as usual in Indian sociology.² It took a national crisis as big as Mandal to alert us to this blind spot, and to goad us into recognizing it as a problem. But let me backtrack a bit to clarify precisely what the Mandal controversy revealed about Indian sociology.

UNEQUAL INEQUALITIES

In its incarnation as *hierarchy*, the idea of inequality is hardly absent from the sociology of India, since it is at the heart of the classic models of the caste system. But the hierarchy avatar of inequality is rather different from the sort of inequality that was at issue in the Mandal controversy. In fact, one could even say that the two are incommensurable.

To begin with, the notion of hierarchy implicated in the caste system tends to *relativize inequality*. While it is obvious that you cannot have hierarchy without inequality, social anthropological models of caste stress the systemic nature of this inequality: almost everyone in the system is unequal with respect to almost everyone else, being above some groups and below others. Because everybody is unequal, they are also in a certain sense equalized by this fact. For instance, in the most sophisticated theoretical model of the caste system we have, that of Louis Dumont, the key feature is the subordination of the (Kshatriya) king to the (Brahmin) priest. This means that even the highest secular power (the king) requires religious sanction from the priest; and even the caste with the highest ritual rank (Brahmin) is subject to the secular power of a caste of lower rank. Thus, the anthropological understanding of caste as hierarchy blunts the sharp edge that inequality often acquires in other contexts.

This is reinforced by the fact that caste in anthropology is defined

as essentially a *consensual system based on complementarity*—this is what differentiates castes from ethnic groups, for example. All castes in a caste system recognize the same basic hierarchy and accept (or at least tacitly acknowledge) their own position within it, though there may be variations and disputes. On the other hand, every ethnic group can have its own version of a social hierarchy in which it usually places itself at the top. Moreover, one ethnic group is conceptually and functionally the same as any other group, whereas castes are functionally differentiated and complement each other, the most obvious illustration of this being the well-known occupational specialization or division-of-labour version of caste. Of course, this describes the classical and not the contemporary anthropological understanding of caste, but the traditional models have cast a long shadow.³

More generally, influential schools of social anthropology have tended to distance caste from the material world and its political conflicts by locating it in the vicinity of religious ritual, ideology and belief systems.⁴ Such a conceptualization, in turn, is both cause and consequence of an excessive emphasis on values to the exclusion of interests. Thus, much of anthropology has dealt with caste in terms of religious texts, ritual status linked to notions of purity and pollution, and rules and customs about marriage (endogamy) and food-sharing (commensality). This is indeed a far cry from the rough and tumble of competitive caste politics in independent India, specially in the Mandal era.

If proponents of Dumont's 'book' view of Indian society have severely neglected the political dimensions of caste inequality, the rival camp advocating M.N. Srinivas' 'field' view is less culpable on this count. It is a frequently mentioned matter of pride for the discipline that a sociologist, M.N. Srinivas, invented terms such as 'sanskritisation', 'dominant caste' and 'vote bank' which have come to dominate popular perceptions of the politics of caste in modern India. There can be no denying the fact that the Srinivas-inspired fieldwork of the 1960s and '70s has greatly improved our understanding of the

concrete content of caste relations and their dynamics vis-à-vis class and power in specific regional contexts. But even this school has had its shortcomings.

One major problem has been the almost exclusive reliance on the standard anthropological method of intensive fieldwork by a single scholar in a very small area (usually a single village). While this has certainly yielded valuable insights, it has precluded any significant attempts at developing a macro-perspective based on a more broad-based coverage of the field. Survey methods in particular have remained underdeveloped.⁵

But most important, perhaps, is the fact that influential sociologists have tended to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds on this issue. They have been the first to criticize the methods used and the macro-data produced to track caste inequality, and their criticisms have often been quite legitimate. However, they have also been in the forefront of opposition to initiatives for the systematic collection of macro-level data on caste, even though they have not, by and large, shown any eagerness to suggest alternative methodologies for data collection.

In the early 1990s, for example, mauling the Mandal Commission's report for its weak database and questionable methodology had become something of a professional pastime for sociologists. But rarely were critics willing to specify what available datasets the Commission had failed to utilize, precisely how it could have improved upon its methodology, and, more generally, how it could have done a better job within the given constraints.⁶ And yet, a few years later, when the collection of caste data in the 2001 census was being mooted, the same voices were heard denouncing this proposal as not just impractical but pernicious.⁷ Once again there was little concern for suggesting alternatives.

Such persistently contradictory behaviour suggests that the real problem with researching caste inequality is not the pragmatic one of data availability, but something deeper. Perhaps the relevant place to look is the prevailing commonsense on caste, which shapes sociologists

and is also shaped by them.

COMMONSENSE ON CASTE INEQUALITY

It would be misleading to suggest that there is any one homogenous commonsense view of caste inequality. Nevertheless, most urban, educated, middle-classes (and therefore largely upper-caste) Indians would tend to think of caste inequality in ways that would include the following elements:

1. Caste inequality is a social evil, in fact a rather terrible thing, and we have to admit that it used to be very bad in the past. However, after independence, things have been changing rapidly, even if not as swiftly or comprehensively as might be desired. The condition of the lowest castes and tribes is improving steadily; the link between caste and occupation is weakening, and members of every caste are now engaged in a much wider variety of occupations than before. Reservation has provided very real benefits to the SC/ST group, but this is being monopolized by a minority within the group. Reservation policies and the like have now become involved in the electoral arithmetic of vote banks and so are extended and continued in all sorts of contexts where they are not warranted.

2. Caste has been given a new lease of life by its encashability in politics. Backward status is now something advantageous and is fought for by all sorts of castes. Since politics is dominated by the numerically stronger lower and middle castes, the upper castes are now facing a very real reverse discrimination.

3. There is a great variation in the economic and social status of members of every caste group. This variation makes it misleading to use caste per se as a criterion to decide backwardness or forwardness. More objective criteria sensitive to individual contexts are needed. The time may have come when caste is no longer particularly useful as a criterion, economic and other criteria being more relevant. Particularly with regard to job reservations, the principle of

compensatory preferences has been overextended, and this has resulted in the 'murder of merit'.

4. Socially and culturally, the main aspect of caste discrimination, namely untouchability, has already been outlawed, and legislatively there is not much more to be done in this area. Whatever prejudices remain are due to the stubborn attitudes of a few diehards. Such attitudes should be condemned and people should be educated to transcend them, but laws cannot really change the way people think. By and large, the upper castes have given up their prejudices and moved beyond/out of caste. Ironically, today it is the lower and middle castes who are the main props for the continuance of this pernicious system.

There is much that is true in this commonsense story, but there is also much that is not most important, perhaps, are the questions that remain unasked. For example, it is perfectly true that, by and large, when compared to the situation prevailing at independence, the condition of all social groups, including the lowest castes and tribes, has improved today. But by how much has it improved? How have the lowest castes/tribes fared in comparison to the rest of the population?

Again, it is almost a truism to say that, today, the variety of occupations and professions among all caste groups is much wider than it was fifty years ago. However, this does not change the massive social reality that the overwhelming majority of those in the 'highest' or most preferred occupations are from the upper castes, while the vast majority of those in the most menial and despised occupations belong to the lowest castes. In short, while it is indeed significant that some members of the lowest castes are now able to occupy very high positions, or that many members of high castes are being forced into menial occupations today, this does not by itself demonstrate that caste and occupational status have been delinked. We must also ask if particular occupations continue to be dominated by particular caste-

clusters, and whether this makes for a recognizable pattern systematically linking privilege and dis-privilege to caste. In other words, the caste-composition of the privileged groups in society is a critical yardstick: as long as this continues to reflect the dominance of the upper castes, it does not matter even if the majority of the members of these castes are themselves poor or disprivileged. This would only demonstrate that while caste remains a necessary precondition for making it into the privileged group, it is not in itself a sufficient condition to ensure entry. One could go on in this vein, but it may be more productive to take up the question of evidence.

Caste as a determinant of life-chances in independent India

The first and most important point to be noted when considering the evidence on caste inequality is that there have been no systematic attempts to collect such evidence. Indeed, the optimism of the Nehruvian era prompted scholars and administrators to take at face value the stridently declared intention of building a caste-less society with a caste-blind state. The explicit constitutional injunction to ignore all differences of caste, creed, religion and so on has been most faithfully followed in the case of caste. Thus, except for the constitutionally sanctioned Scheduled Tribes and Castes, no official statistics have been collected on caste in independent India. Despite the fact that both language and specially religion have proved to be divisive issues sparking violent conflicts, and even though it was the British who began this exercise, the Census of India has quite rightly continued to collect information on them. But ever since independence, the Indian Census has resolutely refused to ask citizens their caste, on the ground that the new state was 'caste blind', and that previous attempts to collect such data were part of the imperial 'divide and rule' policy. So the only reliable data we have on caste is restricted to the three way classification of 'Scheduled Caste', 'Scheduled Tribe' and 'Other'. This data can only tell us about the caste of one-fourth of the population, the

remaining three-fourths being lumped together in the residual term 'Other', which includes non-Hindus and persons with no caste.

The active antipathy towards caste after independence was the joint product of, first, the nationalist movement and its campaign against caste distinctions, and, second, a reaction against what were seen as deliberate colonial policies to create and sharpen divisions among the Indian people. As recent scholarship has shown, neither of these factors is simple or straightforward. First of all, it is a gross simplification to speak of 'the' nationalist movement with a singular and unequivocal position on caste. The angularities and ambivalences of the exclusively upper-caste nationalist leadership are seen even in Gandhi: easily the most visible and effective campaigner against untouchability, the Mahatma also believed that there was something to be said for the 'varna' system which divided society into a hierarchy of segments. The second factor, too, is more equivocal than it appears to be. Although it is easy to believe that a colonial power would foster institutions that produce divisions among the subject population, it is quite difficult to disentangle 'imperial invention' from 'indigenous inheritance' in the history of caste. Moreover, the motives and intentions of the colonial state were by themselves never enough to ensure the successful reproduction over centuries of so widespread a phenomenon as caste.

Whatever the merits of the antecedent causes, the post-independence backlash against caste was strong and sustained. It ensured that one of the paradoxical lessons of modern governance—that the state must measure whatever it wishes to eradicate—would not be learnt. As a result, the data that we have on caste inequality are not only meagre but also *reluctant*, so to speak, needing to be coaxed into existence, and dependent on the accidents of scholarly interest and statistical convenience. What needs to be emphasized is that unlike other comparable situations, the paucity and poor quality of these data is the result of wilful if well-intentioned neglect: we refused to collect such data because we thought we should not collect them and did not need them. However, the irony is that the end result is not

very different from what might have been the case had there been a giant conspiracy to suppress evidence of caste inequality.

It is against this background that we must evaluate the many shortcomings and silences of the available data on caste inequality.

AVAILABLE EVIDENCE ON CASTE INEQUALITY

The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) offers the most broad-based data sets that can provide relatively direct evidence on economic inequality across caste groups. However, for the reasons already mentioned, until the year 2000, the NSSO has always restricted itself to the constitutionally sanctioned categories of the Scheduled Tribes and Castes, with everyone else being thrown together into the vast and immensely diverse residual group of 'Other'. Because it is unable to distinguish between the very different sorts of people included in it (such as the Other Backward Classes, the 'forward' castes, and non-Hindus who may or may not have a caste identity), this category is an analytical nightmare. Nevertheless, flawed as they are, the NSSO data have demonstrated that caste continues to be a major fault line of economic inequality in contemporary India.

The last phrase is particularly important. I have taken up the most recent data available precisely in order to emphasize that we are indeed speaking of contemporary times, not of the bad old days: caste is alive and well *today*, a half-century after its official abolition. In the tables below, I present data from the last quinquennial (five-yearly) 'round' of the NSSO, the 55th Round, conducted during 1999-2000. The five-yearly or 'big sample' rounds are mammoth year-long surveys involving a huge, carefully selected sample of about 1,20,000 households from 12,000 villages and urban blocks all over India. Although academics and policy makers have been concerned about the impact of some changes in the methodology of the 55th Round, there is no reason to believe that this will affect a single time-point comparison across social groups, which is what I am doing here. Moreover, the 55th Round is a historic one because it is the first to

provide data separately for the 'Other Backward Classes'. This allows us, for the first time since Independence, to disaggregate the 'Other' category. In conjunction with the data on religious communities published separately by the NSSO, it is also possible to construct rough 'guesstimates' of the most elusive social group in modern India in statistical terms, namely upper-caste Hindus.⁹

Details of Monthly Per capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) are the most basic and widely used data collected by the NSSO surveys. Since consumption expenditure is considered to be a reliable proxy for income (which is notoriously difficult to measure directly), this is the main database used to estimate poverty levels in the country. The NSSO reports typically divide the range of monthly per capita consumption expenditure (henceforth MPCE) into twelve different size-classes, and tell us what proportion of the rural and urban populations of each social group (caste or religion-based) falls in each of these classes. The twelve size-classes are much too detailed for the purposes of this discussion, so I have consolidated them into four classes: below the official Poverty Line (defined as Rs 329 per person per month for Rural India, and Rs 458 per person per month for Urban India); from the Poverty Line to the next three size-classes above—this may be called the 'above the poverty line' class; the next three size-classes above this, which can be called the 'less poor' class; and finally, the top two MPCE classes, which can be called the 'non poor'.

For someone seeking to understand caste inequality, a severe limitation of the NSSO data is that it is heavily tilted towards the poor—though this is understandable given the policy concerns it was designed to address. It is important to understand what this means in concrete terms. For example, a hypothetical family of five members with a monthly expenditure of about Rs 1,650 or less in rural India, and about Rs 2,300 or less in urban India, would be located on or just below the Poverty Line for 1999-2000. However, at the upper end of the scale, the top two MPCE classes would include all families of five with monthly expenditures of Rs 3,875 in rural India, and Rs 7,500 in

urban India—and all families that spent more. To put this more starkly, in the following tables, a rural family of five spending Rs 3,875 per month is clubbed together with the richest rural family you can imagine, while an urban family of five spending Rs 7,500 a month is placed in the same statistical class as the Ambanis or the Tatas!

This is the reason why we are forced to use very vague grab-bag categories like 'less poor' or 'non poor' which conceal much more than they reveal. This is in part a technical problem because the rich—or even the middle classes—are such a small proportion of the population that it is difficult to ensure that they are adequately represented by standard sampling techniques designed to cover the entire nation. In fact, the NSSO has been making special efforts to 'oversample' the urban non-poor households to ensure that enough of them are covered.¹⁰ While we cannot blame the NSSO data for doing what they were designed to do, namely, provide a detailed profile of poverty, we can and must do two things: first, remind ourselves that even in its present form the NSSO data offers plenty of evidence pointing to the continued existence of a massive caste divide in India in the twenty-first century; and second, look for more direct evidence that is able to confirm or deny the presence of caste inequality among the privileged sections of the population.

55TH ROUND DATA ON SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Table 1 shows us the division of each social group (i.e., caste or religious community) into MPCE classes for Rural India. There are four such classes as explained earlier: Rs 329 or less, which is Below the Poverty Line (BPL); Rs 329 to Rs 470, which is Above the Poverty Line (APL); Rs 470-775 which includes the next three classes of the 'Non Poor'; and finally the topmost class of 'Non Poor' which is everyone above Rs 775. Thus, the column for Scheduled Tribes shows that almost 51 per cent of the community belongs in the BPL group while less than 3 per cent is in the 'Non Poor' group. We can similarly read down the column for any group to see its class composition—the percentage of

TABLE 1
SOCIAL GROUPS STRATIFIED BY MONTHLY PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE CLASSES,
RURAL INDIA, 1999-2000

MPCE Class	ST	SC	OBC	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Other Religions	Hindu Upper Castes?	All Groups
Below Poverty Line	50.9	42.9	33.7	37.5	24.1	6.1	42.6	16.9	33.6
Rs 329 to Rs 470	30.8	34.4	35.8	34.9	27.8	20.9	28.1	32.3	33.8
Rs 470 to Rs 775	15.6	19.2	24.5	22.2	32.5	46.1	22.0	36.6	25.3
Rs 775 or More	2.7	3.4	6.1	5.5	15.6	27.0	7.2	14.0	7.3
All Classes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Columns may not add up to 100 due to rounding errors. Source: Reports Nos. 468 and 469, NSSO, September 2001.

TABLE 2
SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF MONTHLY PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE CLASSES,
RURAL INDIA, 1999-2000

MPCE Class	ST	SC	OBC	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Other Religions	Hindu Upper Castes?	All Groups
Below Poverty Line	15.3	23.0	37.5	11.8	1.6	0.4	0.3	9.5	100.0
Rs 329 to Rs 470	9.2	18.4	39.6	10.9	1.8	1.2	0.6	18.4	100.0
Rs 470 to Rs 775	6.2	13.7	36.2	9.2	2.8	3.6	0.6	27.6	100.0
Rs 775 or More	3.7	8.4	31.1	7.9	4.6	7.4	0.7	36.3	100.0
% of 1991 Popn	10.1	18.0	37.4*	10.5	2.2	2.0	1.4	18.4**	100.0

Note: Rows may not add up to 100 due to rounding errors. Source: Reports Nos. 468 and 469, NSSO, September 2001.

* = OBC figure from NSSO 55th Round, not Census; ** = HUC? figure obtained as residual.

TABLE 3
SOCIAL GROUPS STRATIFIED BY MONTHLY PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE CLASSES,
URBAN INDIA, 1999-2000.....

MPCE Class	ST	SC	OBC	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Other Religions	Hindu Upper Castes?	All Groups
Below Poverty Line	42.6	43.1	36.0	46.5	16.3	15.0	24.7	4.9	28.5
Rs 452—Rs 775	32.6	39.2	39.7	35.9	31.8	36.4	30.9	34.8	37.4
Rs 775—Rs 1,500	19.1	15.9	20.7	15.1	36.0	34.3	31.3	42.2	26.3
Rs 1,500 or more	5.7	2.0	3.7	2.5	15.9	14.4	13.0	17.1	7.8
All Classes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Columns may not add up to 100 due to rounding errors. Source: Reports Nos. 468 and 469, NSSO, September 2001.

TABLE 4
SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF MONTHLY PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE CLASSES,
URBAN INDIA, 1999-2000

MPCE Class	ST	SC	OBC	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Other Religions	Hindu Upper Castes?	Total
Below Poverty Line	6.0	22.7	33.9	28.0	1.7	0.9	2.1	4.7	100.0
Rs 452—Rs 775	3.5	15.7	32.7	16.5	2.5	1.7	2.0	25.4	100.0
Rs 775—Rs 1,500	2.9	9.1	24.2	9.8	4.0	2.3	2.9	44.8	100.0
Rs 1,500 or more	2.9	3.8	14.6	5.5	6.0	3.3	4.0	59.8	100.0
% of 1991 Popn	2.3	12.0	31.4*	16.7	2.9	1.8	2.3	26.6**	100.0

Note: Rows may not add up to 100 due to rounding errors. Source: Reports Nos. 468 and 469, NSSO, September 2001.

* = OBC figure from NSSO 55th Round, not Census; ** = HUC? figure obtained as residual.

its population that belongs in each of the four MPCE classes. The last column provides the class composition of the population as a whole.

However, the class composition of caste groups (i.e., the percentage of each caste's population that is BPL, APL and so on) tells us only half the story. We must also ask about the caste composition of class groups—that is, of all the people who are BPL, APL and so on, what percentage belong to the ST, SC or other caste/community groups? Table 2 provides us this information. It is computed by mapping the percentage distribution of Table 1 to the population totals for each social group. These population totals, in turn, are obtained by taking the 1991 Census data on each social group (the percentage of the total population belonging to the STs, SCs and so on in the 1991 Census) and applying it to the population projection for 2000. Table 2 is organized in terms of the four rows for each MPCE class. Thus, the row for Below the Poverty Line tells us that the BPL population of rural India was composed of 15.3 per cent STs, 23.0 per cent SCs, 37.5 per cent OBCs, and so on across the row. Tables 3 and 4 provide the same data for Urban India and are organized in exactly the same way.

To establish the continued existence of sharp caste inequalities in contemporary India, we need go no further than a comparison of the four caste groups that appear on Tables 1 and 3—ST, SC, OBC and Hindu Upper Castes (HUC). (As already explained, figures for the Hindu Upper Castes are 'guesstimates' and must be treated with caution. Please see note 9 to this chapter.) In Rural India, as Table 1 shows, more than half of the ST population lives below the poverty line. This proportion is only slightly less for the SCs at about 43 per cent, and lesser still for the OBCs at about 34 per cent. However, the HUC are markedly different, with only about 17 per cent BPL. At the other end of the class spectrum, if we look at the Rs 775 and above class, there is a reverse effect: the HUCs at 14 per cent are way ahead of the STs and SCs (both around 3 per cent) and also of the OBCs at 6 per cent. In other words, the 'non poor' are a much smaller proportion of the lower-caste population and a relatively much higher proportion of the upper-caste population. The opposite is the case with the poorest

or BPL class: the lower castes have a huge proportion of their population here, while the upper castes have a relatively much smaller proportion.

In urban India, as Table 3 shows, these inequalities are even more stark. Only about 5 per cent of the HUCs are BPL, while the figures for the lower castes are much higher: 43 per cent for both STs and SCs, and 36 per cent for the OBCs. Conversely, the HUCs have a much larger proportion of their population among the 'non poor' category (or those with MPCE levels of Rs 1,500 or more)—17 per cent—compared to the single digit figures of 6, 2 and 4 for the STs, SCs and OBCs, respectively.

Coming now to the question of the caste composition of the different income or MPCE classes, we see that Tables 2 and 4 confirm the grim picture presented by the previous two Tables. The general pattern is as expected in Rural India, but Table 2 tells us one important fact, namely, that in rural society, the OBCs are the only social group with a remarkably even presence in all economic classes: they constitute 30 per cent or more of each MPCE class from the BPL to the 'non poor'. As against this, the STs and SCs are under-represented among the 'non poor' and over-represented among the BPL. The opposite is the case with the HUCs—they are over-represented among the non poor and under-represented among the BPL. Thus, while arguments about rural OBCs need to be made with care, the case for continuing caste inequalities is very strong.

However, it is in urban India—the seat of genuine privilege—that the inter-caste differences are at their starkest. The most striking feature of Table 4 is the figure in its bottom right-hand corner—the HUCs constitute almost 60 per cent of the 'non poor' urban class. The urban OBCs do not resemble their rural counterparts and are much closer to the STs and SCs in profile. In fact, urban OBCs account for more than one third of the urban BPL population. Tables 2 and 4 provide us with yet another sobering fact: in the year 2000, STs, SCs, OBCs and Muslims together account for 91 per cent of the urban BPL population and 88 per cent of the rural BPL population.

Let me emphasize, in closing this discussion of the NSSO 55th Round data, that these are very significant facts. Commonsense may tell us that the lower castes are now ruling the roost, but the facts are otherwise. Despite the major phenomenon of the rural OBCs—itsself a residual, unexamined category that deserves more detailed attention—caste inequality has been flourishing in rural and specially in urban India. These data are from a very large, national survey; they report proportions averaged across thousands of cases—they cannot be dismissed as being due to inter-individual differences or statistical accidents. The differences between caste groups are too strong and too stable to be artefacts. We have to make the necessary effort to transcend the commonsense view and re-examine the question of caste inequality seriously.

CASTE AND PRIVILEGE

Among the many inanities that were part of 'ragging' in my long-past days as an undergraduate was the benign one of solving riddles, with the fresher being expected to guess the 'correct' answers to set questions asked by the seniors. One of these 'riddles', asked usually at dinner time in the dining hall, went something like this: Q: Do you see an elephant in your custard? A: No, sir. Q: Why not? A: Because it is very well hidden, sir.

This, in essence, seems to be the commonsense response to the abundant evidence in our everyday lives of the strong link between social privilege and upper-caste status. It is now firmly established in contemporary commonsense that the spirit of the times not only favours the lower castes, but is also actively opposed to the upper castes. This feeling is so entrenched in the minds of the largely upper caste urban middle classes that, when confronted with the incontrovertible evidence that most enclaves of privilege are still dominated by the upper castes, they can only insist that this merely shows how cunningly anti-upper caste biases are being hidden.

Consider, for instance, the social composition of the government

sector. In a country where less than 10 per cent of the workforce is in the 'organized sector'—which includes both public and private sector employment—a government job has been and continues to be among the most coveted. But as Table 5 shows, the 'lower' castes still tend to be significantly under-represented in the government sector, and particularly in its upper echelons. Thus, despite the combined quota of 22.5 per cent for the SCs and STs, only about 6 per cent (or roughly one fourth of the reserved quota) of Class I officers of the Central government are from these groups. The representation of the Other Backward Classes—the non-upper caste, non-SC/ST castes who are considered to be 'socially and educationally backward'—is even lower, at under 5 per cent.

One may quibble with these data because they are based on the Mandal Commission's initial ('ad hoc') definition of the OBCs, which required them to meet *both* the caste criterion (i.e., belonging to the 'Shudra' castes) and the educational backwardness criterion (neither father nor grandfather should have studied beyond primary school).¹¹ One may argue that the educational criterion is a rather stringent one, and that there may well be other members of the 'Shudra' castes in government employment who do not meet it. This is certainly possible, but it seems unlikely to change the numbers significantly, for other sources also confirm the broad picture conveyed by Table 5. For example, Santosh Goyal's study (Goyal 1992a) of the social composition of the Indian Administrative Service shows that, in 1985, the 'Shudra' castes account for less than 2 per cent of this elite cadre, in which Brahmins were 28 per cent and Kayasthas 11 per cent. Goyal's data are based purely on the caste criterion (as identified from the last names of officers in the Consolidated Civil List) and are therefore exempt from the objection that might be raised against the Mandal Commission data. However, the caste of about 21 per cent of the officers cannot be identified by her method; of these, about 10 per cent are likely to belong to the SC/ST categories (being direct recruits above the general cut-off age of twenty-six), which leaves about 11 per cent with ambiguous last names who could belong to any caste

group. Even if we make the rather unrealistic assumption that all the unidentified officers belong to the 'Shudra' castes, this still gives a maximum possible percentage share of 12.5 per cent, which is about one-third of their share in the general population. If we make the somewhat more reasonable assumption that the unidentified officers are equally divided among the Forward, Backward and Scheduled Castes, we get a maximum 'Shudra' share of between 5-6 per cent, which is very near the Mandal Commission's estimate for the Class I services in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Representation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes in Central Government Services, 1979-80
(percentage shares in class totals)

	CLASS I SC/ST OBC		CLASS II SC/ST OBC		CLASS III & IV SC/ST OBC		ALL CLASSES SC/ST OBC	
Ministries and Departments	7.2	2.6	13.7	4.0	31.0	8.4	16.8	4.8
Autonomous Bodies, Subordinate Offices	6.6	5.1	18.2	11.7	20.8	21.0	18.1	14.4
Public Sector Undertakings	4.5	4.6	18.7	9.9	31.7	15.8	20.0	10.6
TOTAL	5.7	4.7	18.2	10.6	24.4	19.0	18.7	12.6

Source: Second Backward Classes (Mandal) Commission Report, Appendix VIII, Statement 1.

It has to be reiterated that the messiness and uncertainties that plague this data are the product of deliberate decisions. In fact, the government refuses, except under duress from statutory bodies like the SC-ST Commissions, to publish even the data relating to these constitutionally recognized categories. As Santosh Goyal points out, it is impossible to estimate accurately the aggregate numbers of SC-ST officers in the IAS because the Home Ministry does not release

this data, so that there is no authoritative source of information on whether or not the reserved quotas are being filled. All the indications are that there has been a significant carried forward backlog of unfilled reserved posts during the 1970s and '80s, specially for the Scheduled Tribes (Goyal 1992a:426-27). As already seen, the situation with regard to the Other Backward Classes is much worse, with hardly any reliable data available.

TABLE 6
Caste Composition of Top Corporate Officers, 1979-80

Castes	Chairman, President	Managing Director	General Manager	Director, Ex. Director	TOTAL
Brahmin	135 (36.0)	144 (35.2)	408 (46.2)	171 (41.3)	858 (41.2)
Veishya	83 (22.0)	103 (25.1)	122 (13.8)	64 (15.5)	372 (17.9)
'Shudra'	6 (1.6)	24 (5.9)	35 (4.0)	22 (5.3)	87 (4.2)
Lingayat	1 (0.3)	4 (1.0)	7 (0.8)	1 (0.2)	13 (0.6)
Mallick	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.1)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.1)
Singh	8 (2.1)	6 (1.5)	11 (1.2)	12 (2.9)	37 (1.8)
Khatris	70 (18.7)	69 (16.8)	165 (18.7)	81 (19.6)	385 (18.5)
Kayasth	26 (6.9)	35 (8.5)	119 (13.5)	47 (11.4)	227 (10.9)
Marwari	45 (12.0)	25 (6.1)	15 (1.7)	15 (3.6)	100 (4.8)
Total Caste Identified	375 (100.0)	410 (100.0)	883 (100.0)	414 (100.0)	2082 (100.0)
Total Caste Unidentified	168	274	380	225	1047
Grand Total of Employees	543	684	1263	639	3129

Source: Santosh Goyal, 1990, p.540, Table IV5 (Figs. in parentheses () are % of Total Caste Identified).

If this is the case with the government itself, one can hardly expect the corporate sector to be different. Santosh Goyal's valiant attempt (Goyal 1992b) to profile the social composition of this sector is reported in Table 6. The data in this table cover 3,129 officers of 1,100 large companies (in both the private and public sectors) that accounted for over 90 per cent of the turnover of the Indian corporate sector as a

whole in 1979-80. The designations considered are the topmost in the corporate hierarchy — Chairman/President, Managing Director, General Manager and Director/Executive Director. The caste of the officers is ascertained by the last name (comparing them to the lists published in the 1931 Census, and also by consulting scholars from different regions around the country). The castes of approximately two-thirds (66.5 per cent) of the employees is ascertainable by this method, while the remaining 33.5 per cent are either non-Hindus or of unidentified castes.

As can be seen from Table 6, Brahmins are once again the dominant caste, accounting for more than 41 per cent of the total identified names, and about 27.4 per cent of all employees (including non-Hindus and Hindus of unidentified caste). They are well ahead of all other castes, the next highest being Khatris (18.5 per cent), Vaishyas (17.9 per cent) and Kayasths (10.9 per cent). In fact, these four castes together comprise almost 89 per cent of the caste-identified names. Shudras are once again very low at 4.2 per cent, while the SCs and STs are totally absent among the caste-identified names.

Apart from such formal if severely handicapped attempts to gather data on large areas of public life such as government service and corporate management, there is also a less formal or micro-level evidence that the lower castes are severely under-represented in all the modern professions. As M.N. Panini has pointed out, 'caste clustering' usually implying the overwhelming dominance of the upper castes continues to be true of professions such as engineering, medicine, banking, journalism, and academics (Panini 1996:32-36). In short, in every field offering a promising career in the contemporary world, the upper castes dominate and the middle and lower castes are more or less severely under-represented. Almost two generations after Independence, it is no longer possible to evade these realities as being the by-product of historical inequities. We have to face up to the uncomfortable truth that caste inequality has been and is being reproduced in independent India.

QUESTIONS OF LOCATION: SOCIOLOGY AND CASTE IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA

It may be useful to reiterate the implications of the sort of evidence cited above. Drastic and sustained differences in shares and proportions averaged across very large numbers of individuals from different social groups cannot be explained in terms of differences in individual abilities or circumstances. As Émile Durkheim demonstrated long ago, although every individual suicide is undoubtedly an intensely personal event, the *average rate of suicide* in a society is a social fact. Explanations for differences in the rates of suicide in two different societies or social groups (numbering in millions) cannot be sought at the individual level—we must look to social factors that affect the group as a whole. This is why the commonsense approach that seeks to turn data on the under-representation of the lowest castes in the privileged sections of society into evidence of the 'lack of merit' of these castes is sociological nonsense. Any individual member of any caste may do well or not depending on his or her abilities and resources, but when we speak of *rates* of representation for whole communities with millions of members, all such inter-individual differences are averaged out. If genetic explanations are ruled out—as they have been for a long time—the only reasonable explanation is in terms of the social mechanisms (whether intentionally or accidentally created) of systematic discrimination.

In short, significant differences between social groups are not just another subject for sociological investigation, they are subjects where such investigation is *privileged*. Why, then, has this subject received so little attention in Indian sociology? Indeed, with some exceptions, it would be fair to say that the evidence discussed in this chapter has been produced without any inputs from Indian sociology. To explain this situation, it is necessary to consider not only the commonsense on caste mentioned in the previous section, but also factors specific to the location of Indian sociology as a discipline, and the location of caste within this disciplinary space.

Two aspects of the disciplinary positioning of Indian sociology that were discussed in the Introduction are also relevant here—namely, the dominance of economics and the tilt towards anthropology and its methods, both of which have dissuaded macro-analyses of caste inequality. However, we also need to consider other factors that may have discouraged attention from caste inequality, factors that are more specifically related to this particular institution than to the discipline as a whole.

CASTE AS A COLONIAL CONSTRUCT

An influential strand of recent scholarship has argued that the institution of caste as we know it today is largely a modern and specifically colonial invention. In this view, the policies of the colonial state, particularly things like the Census and other attempts to count, codify or document caste, had the effect of 'substantializing' or solidifying what used to be a diffuse and localized institution. The colonial power 'essentialised' caste—thought of it as an essence that defined Indians and Indian culture—and it set out to measure and document this essence. These efforts at measurement brought into existence precisely that which was sought to be measured. From being a fluid, context-dependent variable, caste turned into a fixed, immutable essence. The nexus between colonial power and colonialist forms of knowledge (like anthropology) thus constructed the very version of caste that colonialism needed to cement its own world view.

It is clear that the considerable work done on this aspect of caste has established the basic point it set out to make, namely that state structures and processes influenced the construction and life of 'ascriptive' attributes like caste. However, it is unclear what the relevance of all this is in the context of discussing contemporary caste inequality. At best, the substantialization argument relates to the past origins of caste differences in the modern era; it says little about the current dynamics of this problem. As the evidence discussed in the previous section shows, whether or not it was a historical invention,

caste inequality is a matter of contemporary fact. And the institution itself has thrived in post-independence India despite its absence from the Census and its Constitutional abolition. In fact, the caste groups that have had the biggest impact on contemporary politics—the OBCs—are precisely the ones that have never been counted or documented in the last fifty years.

Moreover, we have to remember that the substantialization arguments were intended as counters to the colonialist assertion that Indian culture was defined by caste, that it was its essence. Against such positions, the substantialization scholars (from Bernard Cohn through Arjun Appadurai and Sudipta Kaviraj to Richard Smith, Rashmi Pant and others) have done well to establish the processes of construction and deployment that the category of caste went through. However, knowing that a category is constructed rather than primordial does not help us a great deal in evaluating its social effectivity or gauging its content. (After all, knowing that democracy is a notion borrowed from the West does not really help us to understand contemporary politics in India.) In any case, it is up to those who believe that the colonial origin of caste is relevant to our attempts to deal with it in the present to demonstrate how and why this is so.

Broadly speaking, therefore, the colonial origins thesis has the effect of strengthening commonsense arguments that contemporary caste divisions are basically an imperial legacy from the times when the institution was given a new lease of life by attempts to measure and document it.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MODERNITY OF CASTE

Perhaps the most important and least understood set of reasons for the relative neglect of caste inequality have to do with the 'bad odour' that has surrounded this category in modern times. In the classic orientalist approach, caste was held out as incontrovertible proof of India's otherness and its failure to meet the standards of modern-Western

morality. This was hammered home so hard that it entered the Indian psyche as well, and the beginnings of nationalism could only be made in the reformist mode, by insisting that Indians could be cured of caste, that it did not define the totality of Indian tradition, and so on.

What happened here was that without realizing it we acquiesced in the orientalist characterization of caste as other-than-modern. And because nationalism could not be jump-started without re-claiming modernity, caste got locked into the tradition-modernity axis as an atavism, as a social evil that had been an undeniable and unfortunate part of our past, *where it should stay*. Caste had no place in modern India, as our nationalist leaders never tired of declaring. As soon as we get rid of the colonial conditions and apparatuses which foster and encourage it, it will soon wither away. We were so committed to this prognosis that we believed it to be fact. And anyone who did not sportingly agree to ignore the processes by which it was being systematically reproduced in the modern era was made to pay a price, as the careers of Ambedkar and Lohia illustrate.

Given that most sociologists (like other academics) were from upper-caste backgrounds, they could not call upon the accidental resources of personal experience to overcome the powerful consensual positioning of caste in the past. Thus, Indian sociology was unable to address adequately the forms in which caste was being *reinvented as a modern institution*, specially its new modes of reproduction and the fresh meanings and functions it was acquiring in urban India. Although sociologists were tirelessly documenting the continued existence of the phenomenon, they were doing so from within a disciplinary perspective that placed it primarily in the world of 'tradition', which, in practical terms, meant the village, ritual practices, kinship norms and so on. They were ill-equipped, therefore, to track its progress in modern contexts like big-city Chinese restaurants and among safari-suited, English-speaking people who would be genuinely aghast at the idea that caste was part of their social identity.

CHAPTER SIX

The Centrality of the Middle Class

Class seems to be the social science concept that has suffered the sharpest decline in popularity and prestige during the last decade. This is in strong contrast to the 1970s and '80s, when it had inspired and energized the social sciences in India, particularly history and economics. Since then, the collapse of socialism and the broader disarray of Marxism as a political philosophy and a social scientific perspective have made the riches-to-rags story of class seem so self-evident that it tends to be taken for granted. The current intellectual climate does not encourage a critical examination of the reasons for the marginalization of the class concept.

These reasons may be divided into two broad groups: the first relates to the rise of other concepts and categories that have taken over much of the explanatory ground that class used to occupy, while the second (and older) group concerns the internal inadequacies of class itself. Recent developments—like the rise to prominence of categories like gender, race, and ethnicity; the salience of 'new social movements' organized around non-traditional issues like the environment or peace; and the spread of various types of 'identity politics'—seem to bear little or no direct relation to the changing fortunes of the concept of class. But all of these have certainly deepened the crisis of the class concept and amplified the long-standing complaints about its inadequacies.

Indian Village: 'Village Studies' and Beyond

I

Indian village has not only been the subject matter of intense scholarly interest for sociologists/social anthropologists but has also been shorthand for knowing and understanding Indian society by both colonial scholar-administrators and the nationalist intelligentsia alike. No wonder, it attained paradigmatic status as a template of indigenous society and economy and came to be projected as the repository of civilisational essence of the Indian nation. Put differently, the multi-layered imaginary of the village continued to accommodate the projections of colonial administrators and scholars such as Metcalf and Baden-Powell, theoreticians such as Marx and Maine, and the nationalist leaders and scholars such as Gandhi, Nehru and Dutt. Indeed, the efflorescence of 'Village Studies',¹ as a distinctive disciplinary tradition of enquiry, is a testimony to the considerable analytical and theoretical significance that the village enjoyed for more than a century and a half.

In recent decades, however, scholarly pronouncements underline the decline in the sociological significance of the village and the 'Village Studies': 'the village is shrinking as a sociological reality, though it still exists as space' (Gupta 2004: 9). According to Gupta (*Ibid.*: 11), 'the village is no longer a site where futures can be planned'. He discerns the declining importance of the village in India's national culture as also in contemporary political debates in the country which do not have a rural character at all: 'though the majority of Indians live in villages, the village leaves little impress upon the national culture today' (*Ibid.*: 20). In the 1990s, at the level of filmic and urban-nostalgic representation, this general disenchantment with the village manifests itself in the near total absence of films glorifying village at the expense of the city.

From a different theoretical and ideological extreme, Nandy (2001) too notes the decline of the village in the creative imagination of Indians in recent decades. For Nandy, a radical rejection of the village should be seen as the triumph of the colonial city as India's new self, thus, rendering village, as that part of one's self that had outlived its utility. The colonial city is 'the new self, identified with history, progress,

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² We are using the term 'village studies' in the sense it has been used in the conventional sociological literature. The term 'village studies' encompasses various substantive themes. All studies under this rubric are *not* studies of the village *per se*. However, they all have village, as a rule, as the empirical setting for carrying out research work.

becoming' (*Ibid.*: 13). In his reading, the village is no longer a village-in-itself but a counterpoint to the city - a fantasy village for the city. The village has turned out to be more of a dystopia. At any rate, the village is no longer a living presence in mainstream Indian intellectual life, and is gradually taking on the form of a demographic or statistical datum. Much like Gupta, for Nandy as well, the vivacity of an Indian village is not part of the various visions of future floating around in South Asia.

Yet, there are scholars whose faith in the inherent worth of 'Village Studies' is too entrenched to be shaken so easily. For example, the economist Barbara Harriss-White (2004: xxii) writes, 'village studies are far too important to our understanding of economy and society to have atrophied in the way they seem to have done over the last decade'. Similarly, in a provocatively titled panel 'Do Villages Matter?' (at the 18th European Conference of Modern South Asian Studies, Lund, Sweden), Diane P. Mines and Nicolas Yazgi begin their panel abstract by declaring

Villages are desperately lost objects in anthropology of India. Due to a history of ideas beginning with Dumont but continuing through contemporary theoretical concerns that emphasise the deterritorialisation that accompanies broader cultural flows, it has become tantamount to taboo to write about villages as such even though the vast majority of India's population still has powerful links to villages, either as their primary locus of action, or through more widely embedded nexuses of practices and representations.

Though they make a plea for a possible renewal of the 'Village Studies', they do not consider villages to be ontologically bounded entities any longer. They are aware that villages are not merely physical settlements populated by a given number of inhabitants and/or places of belonging for those who live there. Evidently, there is a need to look beyond everyday practices of those who dwell in villages and turn the sociological gaze on the representations of the village as well.

Against this backdrop, this paper is a modest attempt towards appreciating the discursive constitution of the village as a category. This assumes added importance in our discussions of approaching village as part of Indian Society syllabi as sociologists in India are generally not given to questioning the empiricist faith in the substantiality of the outside world. There is a need to go beyond the realm of the 'real', and the 'factual' of conventional 'Village Studies' and sensitise ourselves to various theoretical preconceptions framing the ways we have historically approached the Indian village. Such preconceptions, though implicit, often go unacknowledged (Niranjana 1991: 373). No wonder, a considerable body of village studies is silent on the discursive character of the village. To quote Niranjana:

It must be re-emphasised that the 'village' is not just a domain of study, but also the outcome of sociological discourse. This recognition demands an examination of the

village, as a discursive space which constitutes the meeting ground of political/administrative strategies, while serving to contest several socio-cultural representations of Indian society. Most studies of the village community have adhered to the norms of scientific discourse in sociology, that is, the fact of the existence of the social world has not been queried. Even those who claim that the village in itself is not as important as the processes for which the village is a site, assume the objective status of the village (*Ibid.*: 377).

It is time we meticulously scrutinised 'Village Studies' as regards the ways in which the village has been treated as a historical and sociological category. We have to explore both the village as a fact of territory (that is, as a socio-spatial unit) in the sense of something that exists, and the village as representation in the historical sense of something that is constructed and ideologically deployed.

II

While embodying the fervent call for the 'field view' (as against the 'book view') 'Village Studies' came to facilitate the growth and development of Indian sociology in an empirical direction (farther from the Indological traditions of knowledge). They helped dismantle the colonial and nationalist mythologies and stereotypes about the village as also shaped the methodological strategies and theoretical contours of Indian sociology (at least in its initial years of disciplinary consolidation). Besides, the 'Village Studies' tradition has altered the perceptions about Indian society outside the narrow confines of the discipline as well (Béteille 1996: 245). However, they can hardly be seen constituting a unitary tradition of sociological analysis: the ways they conceptualise and approach *village* differ considerably, as revealed in their emphases as well as silences (one need only recall the debate centring around the *sociological reality* of the Indian village).

Somehow, the ubiquity of village studies sits uneasily with the lack of theoretical attention paid to the category of the village itself. The excessive concern with the documentation and description of field data has discouraged the effort to construct a theory of the village so as to fit and interpret the massive data generated so far. Many sociologists have lamented this theoretical lack. Atal (2003), for instance, finds most of the village studies, though rich in data, to be discrete, descriptive and discipline specific. The considerable data contained in such studies even now cry for proper stocktaking. As Atal (*Ibid.*: 179-80) puts it, 'while methodological questions have been raised and debated, concepts have been evolved and conceptual frameworks have been formulated, no rigorous writing on theory has appeared so far'. He believes that of the three concepts - village, caste, and joint family - very little has been written on the concept of the village. Generally, the definition given by the census has been

accepted, that too when it has been reported that in many cases administrative definitions were unsatisfactory (*Ibid.*: 158).

Clearly, village as a socio-cultural entity is bound to defy administrative categorisation. Also, the obsession of 'Village Studies' with caste has obscured the much-required problematisation of the village itself. It will be too much of stretching of the conceptual repertoire to attribute a theoretical blueprint to village studies in retrospect, even as the latter passed through various overlapping stages: village colonised, nationalised, developmentalised, anthropologised, revisited and globalised (see Breman 1997). As Bêteille (1996: 242) rightfully remarks:

This large enterprise ... moved on its course without any single theoretical master plan. There was no doubt disagreements about concepts, about methods of analysis and interpretation, and about the adequacy and reliability of data. But there was little of the kind of theoretical anguish over 'empiricism', 'positivism' and 'structural-functionalism' that was to torment a later generation of anthropologists. Those who were collecting and presenting materials about villages across the length and breadth of the country felt that they were doing important work, or moderately important work, and they were not greatly troubled by metaphysical doubts about the foundations or purpose of their work. They largely took it for granted that it is possible to write objectively and dispassionately about the life of a community without agonising endlessly over questions of ontology, epistemology, and metaphysics.

III

Much in tune with the trajectory of 'Village Studies', the teaching and learning about Indian village have necessarily focused on questions such as the community character of the village, its political autonomy and economic self-sufficiency. These issues, though hardly settled, have been the stuff of much of the sociological/social anthropological writings on the village. What is somehow missing in conventional accounts is an exploration of the nexus between sociological representation of the village and the policymaking exercise in the context of rural development. While appreciating the enormous significance of development as a state-directed process of change, and noting the impact of planned intervention and social reconstruction on the village in substantive terms, sociologists and social anthropologists, in general, did not explore the implications of rural development in relation to the idea of the village in conceptual and historical terms. Put differently, they either engaged in village studies and/or rural development studies. The proposition that the practices of rural development might shape a particular idea of the village does not seem to have exercised their scholarly mind.

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On the contrary, we argue that rural development discourse², while entailing a hegemonic version of the village, reconfigures the meanings of village in our social imagination. Irrespective of whether rural development programmes fall short of accomplishing their goals, or succeed in meeting the desired targets, they lead to a certain transformation of the terms in which village is talked about. Village becomes a marker of social difference in the overall context of development and modernisation. It is employed as a term of social classification with connotations of the presence, absence or degrees of development. Yet, rural development is the medium in which village is placed in relation to national development. In this sense, the theories and practices of rural development alter conceptualisations of village for the villagers as well. Simultaneously, the pre-eminence of state results in the gradual loss of the defining characteristics of the village as a moral and social universe. As the state sets eligibility criteria and qualifying attributes for inclusion and exclusion vis-à-vis public resources, utilities and services in the context of rural development, village prefers being seen as the village in the eyes of the state. As a consequence, the statist construction of the village seems to dominate other possible frames of its conceptualisation and understanding. More often than not, village in contemporary times turns out to be a 'governmentalised locality'. Indeed, it would be difficult for a village to reaffirm itself as a community with independent initiatives and resources to manage (*a la* Gandhi) and, thus, refuse the demands and expectations of state-led rural development. A focus on the symbolic outcomes of rural development enterprise, thus, yields insights regarding the durability and essentialisation of official-statist categories – village in the instant case.

Rural development programmes³ are, generally accompanied by a certain conceptualisation of the village. While conceiving, devising, promoting and administering such programmes the state necessarily relies on a set of images of the village and the village life. Very often, though, these images of the village coalesce

² By discourse we mean the aggregate of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena, that ensemble of speech acts, utterances, interactions and practices that together constitute a shared arena of public conduct for a collectivity of people. Discourse helps frame issues/problems by highlighting some aspects of a situation rather than others. We have used 'discourse' in the vein of an intellectual framework referring to theory and practice, an interwoven set of languages and practices.

³ By 'rural development programmes' we refer to interventions guided, or more usually, implemented by the state (or by aid agencies though routed through the state agencies). In the Indian context, such interventions generally include policies and attempts made for alleviating the socio-economic conditions of the poor in the villages or developing backward areas.

into a typical, generic village, turning all the villages into *the* village for the purpose of rural development. In other words, the village crystallises into a distinct social category in the context of the statist project of rural development. It is this conceptual joining of the village and development through the mediation of the agency of state (and its outcome in terms of contemporary representations of the village) that seems to have largely escaped the scholarly attention.

We should be exploring ways in which the discourse on rural development constitutes a hegemonic version of village in India. We put forward the argument that rural development discourse recreates the Indian village. Admittedly, we tend to focus more on one particular aspect of the state-village dynamics, that is, how rural development programmes process the village. Though alive to the fact that the village also impacts on the state we have particularly tried to privilege the statist view of village in the context of rural development.

Arguably, village is not merely an ontological category reflecting the morphology of a society where the vast majority of the people are villagers. Instead, rural development alters the meaning of the village in our social imagination. Speaking of village in the context of rural development rarely refers to the actual villages. An implicit opposition between village and development informs rural development discourse: village is something that is characterised by the absence of development. It is simply a backward place by virtue of its being at a remote distance from development. This is precisely why it eminently qualifies to be the recipient of the rural development programmes. Put differently, the acceleration of rural development programmes has reconfigured the images of village over time. The association of village with development leads to a definite alteration in the earlier ways of conceptualising what a village is.⁴ Village as a kind of place (underdeveloped/undeveloped) comes to stand for a kind of people – the villager (backward). The very phrase rural development suggests that villages are in need of development towards some ideal that they have fallen short of attaining.

⁴ There could be numerous ways of conceptualising the village apart from the census and other administrative definitions that privilege demographic, ecological and occupational factors. Studies of the ways in which socially mobile segments of the population relate to the villages they have already left, studies of the urban elite's images of the villages they have perhaps never seen, and the studies of the rural and pastoral imagery in literature, film and other visual media have hardly been conducted in India (for a recent exception see Nandy 2001). Such studies would show dimensions of the images of the village other than those discussed in this paper.

Rural development policies have made an enormous and decisive impact on the course of social transformation in the Indian village during the past half a century or so. The village landscape is dotted with agencies of the state. In a way, rural development discourse encourages the formation of a unified, monolithic village India crying for policy inputs from the state. The *village* of rural development, while transcending the differences of language, region, caste and ethnicity, marks off a common terrain to be developed under the benign guidance of development functionaries. What characterises *village* is the common condition of underdevelopment at which development interventions are aimed. This characterisation of a social territory in exclusive terms of underdevelopment has significant outcomes.

For example, even in popular common sense discourse, development becomes the idiom through which the relationship between the village and state is articulated. This leads to the incorporation of village into state and the associated conversion of villagers into citizens irrespective of the anticipated outcomes of the rural development programmes (see Weber 1979, Ferguson 1990). Along with this a temporal hierarchisation of the village takes place. Since villages are underdeveloped, they remain in the past or, at best, an inadequate present, while other places (non-villages) have already become part of the future by virtue of their being developed. As Gupta (2004: 7) rightly remarks, 'while there is the acknowledgement that rural India is changing in factual terms, yet at the conceptual level village and villagers remain resolutely in the past'. In this sense, the category of the *villager* functions in the same way as the category of *the native* in anthropology (Cf. Fabian 1983). By being placed backward in time, the village typifies a particular social form and the villagers stand for a particular set of beliefs and values. Place and person fuse in the delineation of the essence of the village, as the village is made to stand for a kind of culture-territory in relation to development.

Even as rural development aims to make development an integral part of the village, it also creates a dichotomy between village and development. Development is concentrated in other places, while villages are places of little or no development. In this perspective, the village emerges in counter-distinction to development even though it is the prime target of development. As a consequence, rural development, while intending to bring development to the village, conceptually segregates it as a social world distinct and distant from development. For the practitioners of rural

development, development is the solution and village is the problem. Seen in these terms, while villages are the objects of development and the villagers its recipients, they are also obstacles to national development. This conceptual opposition of village and development, upon which much of rural development programmes is based, thus, leads to a paradox: rural development locates village on the periphery of development, yet, its ostensible aim is to make villages developed (see Pigg 1992).

This is not to say that the village does not contest and redefine the state: 'the state is not only present in the village but the village also penetrates into the state' (Breman 1997: 59). That is, the dynamics between the state and the village is not unidirectional. As recent scholarship on development (see Pigg 1992; Woost 1993; Tsing 1999; Moore 2000) has shown, it is not merely the supra-local sphere such as the state that acts on the village, but the village does appropriate the state in its own image. Moreover, the village does not seem as opaque and fixed to its inhabitants as it appears to the policy makers and planners manning the institutions of rural development. However, how the abstracted social map of the village as carried by rural development functionaries is reworked and appropriated by the villagers in the processes of the implementation of development programmes is not the focus of our discussion here.

Rural development discourse, thus, facilitates the spread of development vision of society as more and more people lay claims to it. At times, the ideologies of development come handy while segregating the village from the non-village. They also serve political interests and, at times, the polarised images of the village and city become the co-ordinates of political idiom (as in *Bharat versus India* debate). The ways of imagining social difference get associated with political uses of identity as underdeveloped or undeveloped. Indeed, rural development becomes the medium in which the villages also start expressing their location vis-à-vis the historical trajectory of national development. Thus, an un(under)developed village ('an infantilised village' *a la* Nandy 2001: 134) waits to pass its developmental milestones to join the ranks of developed villages.

These propositions assume salience as the studies of *Village India* have been intimately tied to the developmental aspirations of the Indian state. Undoubtedly, 'Village Studies' constituted the primary interface between the professionally trained sociologists and the demands of the project of national development. The histories of

the development and growth of Indian sociology unambiguously point out the close connections between the expansion of the discipline and the expectations placed on it by the state (see Singh 1986). One wonders if 'Village Studies' had acquired the prominence it did in Indian sociology without the attendant expectations generated as part of the state-led enterprise of rural development. Indeed, the empirically grounded village studies helped establish credentials and claims of Indian sociology as policy relevant and thus capable of contributing to the task of national development. Not surprisingly, sociologists invested heavily in understanding 'India's Changing Villages' in the overall context of rural developmental policies and the practices of social engineering. Nonetheless, they did not forcefully drive home the central point that rural development has not merely been a medium in which the discourses and practices of development are conveyed to villagers but has also significantly shaped the way in which inhabitants of a particular settlement conceive of themselves as belonging to a village.

IV

...Arguably, the village has been constituted as a category through specific discourses and practices of the state (rural development in the post-colonial context). Theoretically speaking, the village, rather than being a pre-given social entity, becomes enmeshed with the act of naming or categorizing initiated by the state. By its very nature, such classification is always political. This underlines the need to pay scholarly attention to the village not merely as a binary sociological description (as in rural-urban) but also to the ideological and political work that it does. The category of the village could very well be deployed as strategic representations in policy debates with definite aims towards advocating rights and mobilizing opinion (as in now-defunct Rural Quota Scheme in Karnataka).

More importantly, rural development offers a contested site for the negotiation of identity on the part of the village. No wonder, villagers increasingly tend to define themselves in and through the terms that objectify them in the form of discourses of rural development. Increasingly, it is the uncanny presence of the state in the life of the village that distinguishes the thickening nexus between the state and the village. It seems as if the village derived its own existence from a particular reading of the state.

In fact, recent historical and anthropological scholarship calls attention to the historicity of particular identities and questions the givenness and substantiality of

many a long-standing social formations. As against the substantivist understanding, scholars of this persuasion draw upon Foucault and Said while asserting that caste and other identities were invented under colonialism by the operation of certain political and discursive practices and processes. They identify colonial state as the primary source and dispenser of identity. Though this scholarship is primarily concerned with caste and religious identities, the arguments can, and has been extended to the village as well. It was none other than Baden-Powell who wrote, 'as to the villages being unchangeable, their constitution and form has shown a progressive tendency to decay, and if had not been for modern land-revenue systems trying to keep it together, it may well be doubted whether it would have survived at all' (cited in Srinivas 1996: 10).

In the case of British India, it has been posited that the Indian village is largely a product of the 'rule of records', the pre-eminent governing technique at the disposal of the Raj (see Smith 1985, 1996). In their desire to govern India as rigidly as possible, the British inaugurated a massive data gathering exercise. Consequently, it is possible that the British categories of thought influenced the collection as well as recording of information. Put it simply, the identification of the village as a key category, in epistemological terms, was intimately linked to the construction of India in a particular image during the British rule. In the process, a reification of the indigenous institutions, village in our case, took place and the Indian village was flattened and stereotyped. That is, techniques of rule have always included the ideological so far as it gave rise to new categories of thought and analysis. So far only Inden (1986, 1990) has applied this line of analysis exclusively to the construction of the Indian village.

In general, during the colonial rule, people were measured, classified, and quantified through censuses and other information gathering exercises. The compilation of massive data necessitated an analysis in intelligible terms (to the rulers, at least). This, in turn, led to the invention of categories and these categories were applied per force to the statistical data. Because governing practices entailed the counting and categorisation of people in terms of collectivities, people began to see and organise themselves in terms of those very categories (see Appadurai 1993; see also Kaviraj 1992). Modern governing practices thus reconstitute the meaning of community for one and all. Once constructed such identities continue to exert seminal influence in the post-colonial context too. After all, people continue to be counted by census, and are regularly enumerated and surveyed. If the categories make the people,

then how and why of this making should not stop with colonialism but could be extended to development discourse as well (Cf. Upadhy 2001: 32-58).

In other words, the state⁵ can be seen as constituting *essentialised* communities. In the long run, these communities become actors in the political arena in their own right and thus further reinforce and perpetuate their received identity. Examples can be cited of the essentialisation of such identities as the *rural*. Thus, there are cases where those areas that would classify on all the accepted indices of urbanisation as urban prefer (and at times manipulate their way through officialdom) to officially remain rural so as to attract more funds from the developmentalist state and other gains that come by virtue of being rural (see Pandey 2003: Fn. 8). Similarly, in the state of Karnataka, rural has been used as a basis of the government policy of positive discrimination (mainly quota in jobs). Also, there are instances where this essentialised rural identity has led to massive mass mobilisations on a variety of issues (see Joshi 1985, 1988; Byres 1988; Gupta 1997).

The point is not whether the identities thus ascribed or achieved are false or unreal. The significance lies in the fact that people are persuaded, coerced, tempted and mobilised on the basis of such constructed identities. Sociologists ought to explore as to how the identity called 'rural' has undergone shifts in its inflections. Suffice it say that one's identity as the rural, or from the village, is also a tool for making claims on the resources of the modern state and a way of negotiating with it. In other words, the discursive constitution of social identities need not overlook the concrete political or economic structures within which such construction takes place.

V

The foregoing discussion reveals the naturalisation and essentialisation of the village as a category not only in the British colonial discourse and the subsequent formulations of Indian nationalists but also in the context of rural development (that is, in the world of development practitioners including trained sociologists and social anthropologists). For long, the village as the site of state-sponsored development vision has appeared as an identifiable object to development administrators and bureaucrats. The latter have produced knowledge that is recognisable only to the extent that it evokes official-developmental ideas about the village. However, these official

⁵ Much of the literature in this tradition focuses primarily on the colonial state. However, Kaviraj (1992) finds this construction inherent in the very nature of modernity. So, for him, any modern state has a role to play in the constitution of substantialised and essentialised communities.

ideas also have undergone changes. Whether villages are projected as homogenous or united communities or socially stratified ones, their representations have always been vulnerable to the official categories of knowledge. Though, in this paper, we have confined ourselves to only such discursive constitution of the village as a category – the rural developmentalist.

Thus, so far as Indian village is concerned, any attempt at reorienting the syllabi (with a view to bridge the gap between the syllabi and the immediate social reality) should factor in the following possible trajectories (besides the one discussed in the preceding sections)⁶:

One could approach the village as an entry point to understand the history and character of colonial forms of knowledge by demonstrating as to how the exercise of power and the accumulation of knowledge were both parts of a larger colonial project. While locating the specific career of the term 'village' as part of the history of colonial knowledge about India and the use of that knowledge in official projects, colonialism itself may be revealed as being as much about policies as about theories and strategies of representation. In this sense, the historical anthropology of the colonial state gets tied up with that of the modern nation-state. Indeed, what Dirks calls 'the epistemological violence of the British rule' has left its imprint on the categories of contemporary thinking. Viewed thus, a critical delineation of the colonial construction of the village and its epistemological impact on ethnographic/anthropological research on the village, and demonstration as to how ethnography participated in an interlinked intellectual and institutional power/knowledge apparatus could be a possible line to follow.

Secondly, one could go for an exposition of the Indian nationalist appropriation of the idealised village, its historicity as well as its contemporary articulation. Thanks to the colonial construction of the 'immemorial' village community, even for Indian nationalists the village remained a compelling sign of 'traditional' India, which the colonial rule had sought to sustain for its own purposes. Eventually, Indian nationalists appropriated this idealised village, as they saw in these communities evidence for the

⁶ Partly based on ideas contained in Personal Communication (dated 9 August 2004) from Diane P. Mines, Appalachian State University (USA) and Nicolas Yazgi Neuchâtel University, Switzerland

antiquity of an Indigenous concept of democracy, socialism, and much more that suited their ideological palate.

Thirdly, a possible way of approaching the village might lay in the revisiting of the hitherto existing assumption of an unproblematic equation between the village and the peasantry. To the extent that the agrarian character of the village is fast changing, one needs to problematise the village as the primary locus of a peasant society: does the village continue to be the site for Chayanovian 'peasant family farm' and the corner stone of the agricultural economy? It is not that the identity of the Indian village with a peasant community has not been debated in the past, but the issue has acquired a certain urgency given far-reaching developments owing to migration and the changes in the character of rural employment, namely, the high incidences of rural non-farm employment.

Lastly, one could undertake the more challenging task of unravelling current instances of appropriation/romanticisation/essentialisation in spheres that go beyond the nationalist label (though overlapping substantially with it, for example, in the writings of Dharampal⁷). Such conceptualisations are important as they are not merely in the realm of ideas but also have pragmatic impact in the way many voluntary organisations and NGOs work. They inform various forms of politics and voluntarism. Many environmental and alternative technology movements in India work with concepts of the village that bear an inverse relationship with the urban-industrial pathologies to which the Indian city is heir (Nandy 2001: 20). In their imagination, village represents some sort of serene and pastoral paradise offering a perfect community life. It is seen as 'the depository of traditional wisdom and spirituality, and of the harmony of nature, intact community life and environmental sagacity – perhaps even a statement of Gandhian austerity, limits to want and anti-consumerism' (*Ibid.*: 14). Here, village, as the ultimate prototype of Indian civilization, serves not merely as a critique of the city, but also as the anchor of traditional visions of a desirable way of

⁷ For Dharampal, common ownership of land was the typical characteristic of an Indian village. *Sasana* villages around Puri and *Samudayam* villages in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu boasted of this till 1937 when it got dissolved because of the state's intervention with 'land to the tiller' policy (nd: 8). According to him, 'most of these systems [of land rights] seem to have assumed the supremacy of the village community over the land, its disposal, or the way it was worked' (*Ibid.*: 26). Further, '... the Indian villager, was in no sense inferior to his counterpart in England, or other countries of the West, ... he perhaps was far superior to the mid-20th century peasant or craftsman of the West' (*Ibid.*: 5). Indigeneity comes out as a great virtue in this line of thinking and even Indian nation-state gets seen as an overbearing monster built as it is on alien concepts and theories.

life and the inexhaustible depot of pre-modern (nay, non-modern) environmental-cultural sensibility and people's critique of urban-industrial development.

In the ultimate analysis, our syllabi have to reflect the changing political-cultural reality of the village and the attendant representational mutations of the idea of the village. We have to highlight the denial of temporal co-evalness to the village in the context of rural development as well as its framing as the counter-city and an escape from the city amidst globalising discourses on environment. Also, we have to be alive to the creation of 'authentic' villages in the very heart of metropolitan India (see Tarlo 1996). Sociology curricula and classroom can give us a sense of the growing distance between the reality of the village and its contemporary representations in a way that we are aware as to how and why the village that lives here and now, only a few miles away from the city, gets transported to a remote past and a distant land.

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7. See *Religion and Society among the Goorgs of South India*, p. 19.
8. See Chapter 9, 'Varna and Caste', in this book.
9. Ibid.
10. Dr. Adrian Mayer, however, states that the balais (Untouchables) in the Malwa village which he is studying are trying to move into the Shudra varna. It would be interesting to see if they succeed in their efforts. See Dr Mayer's essay, 'Some Hierarchical Aspects of Caste', *South Western Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. XII, No. 2, pp. 117-144.
11. See *Caste and Class in India*, Bombay, 1952, p. 65.

~~Reading 24-21~~

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READING - 14

THE COHESIVE ROLE OF SANSKRITIZATION¹

Sanskritization has been an important cultural process ever since the Vedic Aryans established themselves in India. S.K. Chatterjee has written:

The progressive-Sanskritization of the various pre-Aryan or non-Aryan peoples in their culture, their outlook and their ways of life, forms the keynote of India through the ages. And in the course of this 'Sanskritization' the affected peoples also brought their own spiritual and material milieus to bear upon the Sanskrit and Sanskritic culture which they were adopting and thus helped to modify and to enrich it in their own circles (1950: 148).¹

Sanskritization is not confined to any single part of the country, but is widespread in the subcontinent, including remote and forested regions. It affected a wide variety of groups, both those within the Hindu fold and others outside. (It was even carried to neighbouring countries such as Ceylon, Indonesia, and Tibet.) With the absorption of each new group not only did the corpus of Sanskritization as well as its prestige increase, but absorption actually became easier.

British rule set in motion a vast array of forces, some of which greatly strengthened Sanskritization, while others were either hostile or indifferent to it. It was also during British rule that the Westernization

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of India began, a complex and wide-ranging process, and one whose significance is likely to increase greatly in the future.

Sanskritization may be briefly defined as the process by which a 'low' caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a 'twice-born' (*dwija*) caste. The Sanskritization of a group usually has the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy. It normally presupposes either an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher group self-consciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the 'Great Tradition' of Hinduism such as a pilgrim centre or monastery or a proselytizing sect.

The existence of a highly systematized hierarchy both favours and inhibits the Sanskritization of the lower castes. The culture of the higher castes enjoys great prestige, and ambitious lower castes would like to take it over. As against this, however, the locally dominant caste would want its culture to be its exclusive property, and not be usurped by a low caste. But in spite of this, Sanskritization did spread, over the centuries, to groups in every part of the country.

In the case of a group external to Hinduism such as a tribe or immigrant ethnic body, Sanskritization resulted in drawing it into the Hindu fold, which necessarily involved its becoming a caste having regular relations with other local castes.

Sectarian movements often acted as agents of Sanskritization, and when they attracted members from low castes they helped to raise their status. But, as is well known, a sect was regarded as more or less a caste by outsiders, and within it there were endogamous castes. This situation is typical of the caste system in which the internal divisions of a caste are ignored by outsiders.

The above remarks apply to sects which popular opinion regards as being firmly within the Hindu fold. In the case of sects which are either marginal or outside, conversion to the sects failed entirely to dissolve caste distinctions among the converts.

Sanskritization is a profound and many-sided cultural process, only a part of which has structural relevance. Its impress is seen in language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life, and ritual (see, Raghavan 1956). Its influence is not confined to Hindus, but is visible even in sects and religious groups outside Hinduism.

In order to assess properly the contribution of Sanskritization to Hinduism and India, it is necessary to remember certain features of

Hinduism which mark it off sharply from other world religions. Hinduism does not have the kind of overarching formal structure that Roman Catholicism, for instance, has, nor a body of trained missionaries who are devoted to convert the unbelieving. There is no body of dogma to which all Hindus are required to subscribe. Hinduism is also not a 'congregational' religion and Hindus are not required to gather together for weekly prayers as are Muslims and Christians.

Hinduism is best described as a loose confederation of innumerable cults, the connecting threads of which are found in Sanskritization, and, in the last resort, Brahmins. There are cults of ancestors, of caste, village, and sectarian deities, and of the great gods of Hinduism. There are centres of pilgrimage which draw pilgrims from regions varying in extent from the entire subcontinent to a local area composed of a few neighbouring villages. These centres may be temples, rivers, river sources and confluences, the sea at some places, tombs of saints, and places associated with epic heroes. Centres may be visited throughout the year, or only on certain special occasions. The calendrical festivals observed by Hindus may again vary from the strictly local to those common to Hindus everywhere. In the case of the latter there are regional variations in ritual, myth or belief, or all the three. Occasionally, what is common is nothing but the festival name.

The sacred literature of the Hindus, in Sanskrit (or inspired by Sanskrit, but in a regional or other language), has played a vital part in enabling Sanskritic Hinduism to absorb local cults. The two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata and the Puranas, which are popular stories about the great gods of Sanskritic Hinduism and their relatives, retainers, and followers, have been especially significant in this connection. According to Dowson:

The *Puranas* succeed the *Itihāsas* or epic poems, but at a considerable distance of time, and must be distinguished from them. The epics treat of the legendary actions of heroes as mortal men, the *Puranas* celebrate the powers and works of positive gods, and represent a later and more extravagant form of Hinduism ... (1973: 245).

The contribution which the Puranas have made towards the production of a common religious culture out of a vast and heterogeneous mass of local beliefs, myths, and cults has been described by Raghavan:

In religious dogma and cult *puranas*, *agamas* and *tantras* show how the great tradition absorbed different local cults and made a pattern and system out

of the heterogeneous practices functioning at different levels. A common phenomenon is the sudden emergence in relatively full-fledged form of a deity and its worship, for example, Ganesha, Durga and Radha, and of cults and schools of thought like the Shaivite and Vaishnavite sects, the adoration of Kartavirya, Dattatreya, etc. Though philosophers and Sanskrit religious authors ignored them, they were winning status among the people, and the time came when they first entered the popular books, the *puranas*, which provided a liaison between the learned classes and the masses. The accepted eighteen *puranas* were revised, eighteen minor *puranas* came into being, and many other *Samhitas* and *purana*-like compilations were composed which incorporated all this growing material. As the locale of this culture expanded, new holy spots, shrines and sacred waters (*ksetra* and *tirtha*) in newly occupied regions were designated. *Purana*-like accounts (*Mahatmya*) described the new sites, linking them by significant legends to epic heroes and gods and to episodes mentioned in the *Itihasas* and *puranas*, and thus sanctifying them (1956: 500).

The superficial observer of Hinduism is apt to be bewildered by its seeming lack of form, its great complexity, its multitude of gods, and its heterogeneous modes of worship. To take but one example: the idea of a single supreme being originally became crystallized towards the end of Rig Veda *Samhitas*, and was fully developed in the period between the *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* (Dowson 1973: xi). But it was significant that the development of monotheism did not result in the rejection of polytheism and henotheism. They all existed together, but the position of Brahmins in the caste hierarchy and the prestige of Sanskrit Hinduism were such that henotheism and monotheism were preferred to polytheism by upwardly mobile groups. The fact that alien groups could enter the Hindu fold over a period of time, and that there were prospects of social mobility for groups already inside Hinduism, meant that they had to take over the beliefs of the higher castes.

Polytheism, henotheism, and monotheism constitute a continuum. In both polytheism and henotheism a number of deities are propitiated, but in henotheism the deity who is being worshipped at the moment is regarded as supreme. In other words, henotheism may be regarded as momentary monotheism. According to Dowson (1973), there was, in Vedic religion, '... a constant tendency to elevate now this one now that one to the supremacy, and to look upon him as the Great Power'. Momentary monotheism may either lead to permanent monotheism or a substitute for it. Here again it must be pointed out that Hindu monotheism is profoundly different from Islamic or Christian monotheism. All gods are true gods, but

as a group develops it sees that there is only one god who is called by different names by different people. According to the Rig Veda: 'God is one but sages call him by different names.' The daily *sandhya* prayer of Brahmins includes the hymn: 'Just as all the rain-water pouring down from the sky reaches ultimately the ocean, salutations to various gods reach ultimately Keshava [one of the names of Vishnu].'

In this connection, the existence of a certain division of labour among deities forces the usually monotheistic Hindu to be 'polytheistic'. Thus when success is wanted in any enterprise the elephant-headed Vinayaka, the son of Shiva, is worshipped. Lakshmi is worshipped for wealth, Saraswati for learning, and so on. In addition, in popular Hinduism, innumerable deities have a reputation for granting such tangible benefits as children, the cure of cattle diseases, and the cure of particular ailments of human beings. Village goddesses in several parts of India preside over the epidemics of plague, cholera, and smallpox, and even Brahmins learned in Sanskrit worship them.

The average Hindu, then, worships a multiplicity of deities, but the idea that all of them are only manifestations of the one god who is present everywhere and who has many forms makes Hindu polytheism qualitatively different from other polytheisms.

It is in sectarian Hinduism that a spirit of exclusiveness is visible, but even there it is not great enough to insist on the exclusive propitiation of only one god. To take the example of an extreme sect: the Shri Vaishnava Brahmins of the south worship only Vishnu. Orthodox Shri Vaishnavites boast that they will not visit a Shiva temple even if dragged by elephants. But Vishnu himself has many *avatars* and manifestations, and Shri Vaishnavites worship Vishnu in each of his manifestations.

A popular mode of worshipping a deity is to chant his 108 (*ashtothara*) or 1000 (*shahasranama*) names. These names refer to the various attributes, forms, and manifestations of the deity who is being worshipped. The idea of manifestation which resulted in a deity or even historic personality being made out to be a great god was a potent source for the absorption of the deities of low castes and tribal people. Village goddesses in most parts of India have been identified with Shakti, who is in turn a manifestation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva. The cobra deity is identified in South India with Subramanya, the warrior son of Shiva. The Kaveri River is identified with the Ganga (River Ganges), Rama and Buddha are both regarded as *avatars* of Vishnu, and so on. Identification not only enables wide cultural gulfs to be spanned, but also provides

eventual transformation of the name and the character of the deity, and the mode of worshipping him. Many Sanskritic deities worshipped in India today began their existence in the dim past as the deities of low castes or tribes.

The deities of the Sanskritic pantheon are very much family men, except Ganapati (or Vinayaka), the remover of obstacles, and Hanuman, the monkey devotee of Rama. The god's wife or wives are also worshipped. The two sons of Shiva, Ganapati and Subramanya are great gods in their own right. The animal or bird on which a god sits (*vahana* or 'vehicle') also becomes an object of worship. The Brahmani kite is the 'vehicle' of Vishnu; the peacock, of Subramanya; the bull, Nandi, of Shiva; and the field-rat, of Ganapati.

The pantheistic idea that all things are animated by god provides a philosophic rationale for the worship of such objects as stones, trees, animals, and rivers. But it should be noted that when a tree is worshipped, it is usually mythically associated with a Sanskritic deity or an epic hero. The *ashwatha* tree (*ficus religiosa*), for instance, is regarded as the abode of Vishnu in his form as Narayana. All the major rivers of India have myths which testify to their sacredness and to their sin-cleansing virtues, linking them with Sanskritic deities, or famous seers (*rishis*) or epic heroes.²

The epics also have been responsible for the spread of Sanskritic Hinduism: they have not only transmitted to the people a knowledge of the great gods of Hinduism and certain basic theological ideas, but have also helped to spread a common culture throughout the country. The epics, and the innumerable stories included in them, constitute the foundation of the literature in every Indian language. The fact that the institution of *harikatha*, or public reading of the epics and Puranas by trained masters of that art, was a popular pastime and made it possible for Sanskritic Hinduism to reach even the illiterate masses.

In the Tamil country, however, there has been an attempt to reject the older epic Ramayana on the ground that it is northern, Aryan, and anti-Dravidian. The organized hatred for the Ramayana is part of the Tamil non-Brahmin movement, a cultural and political movement which began towards the end of World War I.³

Thus far I have concerned myself with those characteristics and aspects of Sanskritic Hinduism which enable it to absorb local cultural beliefs. When a local cult is so absorbed there is an addition to the corpus of Sanskritic Hinduism and, historically speaking, Sanskritic Hinduism has grown by such additions. McKim Marriott (1955) has

called this process 'universalization', and its opposite—the process by which an element of Sanskritic Hinduism becomes localized—as 'parochialization'. Just as a local element becomes transformed in the course of its ascent into Sanskritic Hinduism, a universal element similarly alters its identity in the course of descent into 'parochial' Hinduism. Another term for 'parochialization' is 'de-Sanskritization'.

The complex character of the processes subsumed under Sanskritization is illustrated when ideas which have been occasionally developed through the regional language but under Sanskritic inspiration have returned to Sanskritic Hinduism after undergoing a transformation.

An example of this is seen in the name of the shrine of the famous Nataraja at Chidambaram. The shrine embodies the *Daharavidya* of the Upanishads. *Dahara* or *dahra* or *dibhra* means 'small' and *dabhra-akasa* is the small or microcosmic space, the image of the macrocosmic *akasa*, of which the correct Tamil rendering is *Sirrambalam* or *sirumbalam*. But when the *akasa* was also thought of as embodying *cit*, the principle of consciousness, the name *sirrambalam* or by a quasi-folk etymology remade as *cid-ambaram*, a freshly formed Sanskrit name, which still persists. Sanskrit devotional literature was also increased by re-absorbing in Sanskrit garb, material which was originally given to the people in their own local tongues (Raghavan 1956: 501).

I shall now mention the main agents of Sanskritization. Since Sanskritization is intimately related to social mobility, it is necessary to state here that, while the overall character of the traditional system was stationary, it did allow for the mobility of particular groups and families.⁴ The sources of such mobility were the political system, which was characterized by fluidity, especially at the lower levels, and the ecological-demographic system which made it possible for families to move out and bring marginal land under cultivation.

Historically, the second varna or caste category of Kshatriyas or warriors seems to have been the most open, accommodating all kinds of groups, indigenous as well as alien, the only necessary qualification being the effective possession of political power. But, sooner or later, power has to be translated into authority, and it was precisely in this situation that Sanskritization was important. He who became chief or king had to become a Kshatriya whatever his origins. In those areas where a bardic caste existed, the chief was provided with a genealogy linking him to a well-known Kshatriya lineage and even to the sun or the moon. The chief's style of life, including the ritual he performed, had to be modelled on that of the

classical Kshatriyas and in order to be able to do this he had to seek the support of the Brahmins. The indispensability of Brahmins is pointedly seen in the fact that in areas where there was no established Brahmin caste, the chief had to either import them from outside, offering them gifts of land and other inducements, or create Brahmins out of some ambitious local group.

On their side the Brahmins had a positive approach to anyone who wielded power. Here the well-known dictum '*na vishnuh prithivipath'*' (One becomes a ruler by virtue of his embodying an element of the divine in him) came into play (ibid.: 409; see also, Chanana 1965). This was extended even to Muslim and British rulers. Brahmins were predisposed to revere power and they helped to legitimize power into authority. They performed the essential Vedic rites which proclaimed the kingly status of the actual wielder of power, and sang his praises in Sanskrit.

The ruler and his caste were in turn potent sources of Sanskritization, both in the support and patronage they gave to priestly and learned Brahmins, and in providing a particular model of Sanskritized life-style to those who came under their influence.

Every great temple and pilgrim centre was a source of Sanskritization, and the periodic festivals or other occasions when pilgrims gathered together at the centre provided opportunities for the spread of Sanskritic ideas and beliefs. Several other institutions such as *bhajan*, *harikatha*, individuals such as the *sanyasi*, and other religious mendicants, also helped to spread ideas and beliefs of Sanskritic Hinduism.

The relation between Sanskritization and Westernization is intricate and many-sided,⁵ and I shall not attempt its analysis here. It is enough to note that it is extremely complex, and that some new agencies such as the All-India Radio, school textbooks and films, spread both Sanskritic and Western ideas and beliefs. Dependence on local centres decreased with the great development of communications which occurred following the advent of British rule, and this again favoured the spread of Sanskritization as well as Westernization. As Marriott has stated:

But those few persons and groups of Kishan Garhi who have demonstrably in recent times taken on more Sanskritic, great traditional forms of religion, seen in every instance to have obtained them, not from the local higher castes, but from itinerant teachers of exotic cults, from urban-centred associations of recent growth, from new state schools, or from the market place. A newly standardized great tradition is thus externally available to the people of Kishan Garhi as a

transformed, now heterogenetic criticism of the indigenous religious order of the village (1955: 211; emphasis mine).

The development of communications and the extension of Sanskritization to innumerable groups have resulted in a radical transformation of traditional culture. A highly simplified and uniform culture has emerged to suit the needs of a vast body of illiterate people in every part of the country.

I shall now briefly consider the relation between caste and Sanskritization. I shall first consider the varna model of caste and then the jati model. The conceptual division of society into four distinct hierarchical categories is of Vedic origin, and finds clear expression in the sacred literature of the Hindus, including the law books or Dharma-sastras. The varna model may, therefore, be regarded as the literary or ideal model of the caste system, but that should not be understood to mean that it did not have any relation to existing reality. A relation did exist, though it varied in different parts of the country and during different periods of Indian history. (It has not yet been the subject of systematic analysis.) One of the interesting features of this relation is that with the enormous development of communications during British rule, and the rise of a Western-educated intelligentsia, the popularity of the varna model has been continuously increasing. The need to translate the jatis of different regions into a single India-wide framework is greater today than previously, thanks to the spread of education, and increased urbanization and spatial mobility (Marriott 1959: 104-5). Equally important is the fact that educated and urban Indians live only very partially in the universe of caste, and their relations with other individuals are not always, or even frequently, referable to caste. With the growth of secularization, ideas regarding pollution and purity are becoming weaker. This is more marked in urban than in rural areas.

Rural and urban castes differ significantly from each other, and are also gradually becoming part of a single system. In rural areas the interdependence of all the castes living in a village or group of neighbouring villages is emphasized, whereas in the towns the 'horizontal' character of a caste stands out. But this is becoming progressively less true. And, as Marriott has pointed out, with the increase of urbanization, education, and geographical mobility people will increasingly use the varna model of the caste system: 'Attributional

analysis will tend to be more readily used ... by persons who are not only urban, but also educated—who are strangers to the small community. Interactional ranking is more to be expected as the logic of untutored, untravelled villagers' (ibid.: 104). That the varna idea distorts reality is only too obvious.

Existentially, caste may be viewed as a series of local systems of interacting jatis linked in an all-India framework by means of the idea of varna. The varna idea is influential in local systems of jatis in varying degrees, and within a local system different jatis show differential awareness of the varna idea. This in turn is related to their political, economic, and social position, and to the degree of their awareness of the wider society of which they are a part.

The local character of the caste system was even more pronounced in pre-British India (Miller 1954). Relations between castes or even between members of the same caste did not usually cross the frontiers of the smallest political unit. This was poignantly illustrated in the statement of a Nayar washerwoman of Calicut who told me that she had not crossed the bridge across the local river Kallai to the northern bank, as that would result in her losing her caste.

The local system was a 'vertical system' in the sense that the jatis living in it were, in the first place, constrained not to extend their relations with their castefolk living beyond the political frontiers, and this in turn was a factor in their having intimate relations with each other. A more important factor in local interdependence was castewise specialization in occupation.

Each local system represented a unique hierarchy of jatis. Two sections of a single jati could, for instance, occupy different positions in their respective, local hierarchies. Such a situation was one of the many consequences of the mobility inherent in the system. A jati's position in the local hierarchy was not always clear and this indeterminateness again was a function of mobility. In fact, in the traditional system, one of the functions of the king was to settle the rank of a caste when there was a dispute. It would be reasonable to assume that only a few disputes were serious enough to be taken note of by the king, and that the smaller disputes did not go beyond the council of the locally dominant caste.

The character of the locally dominant caste was important in determining the extent to which the jatis of a region were Sanskritized. It provided an immediate model for the local, non-dominant castes to imitate, while the varna idea was distanced in comparison. In fact, the varna ideas had to be articulated only through particular, local

jatis, and if these were not dominant, not only did they not exercise influence on the other castes, but ran the risk of themselves being influenced by the culture of the non-Sanskritized dominant castes. This is indeed the process of 'de-Sanskritization'.

But Sanskritization and de-Sanskritization are not entirely dependent upon local forces, and were not so, even in pre-British India. Speaking generally, a certain amount of the varna 'aura' hung around Brahmins everywhere, and where a dominant caste of Peasants wanted to pass for Kshatriya or Vaishya, it had to resort increasingly to the services of the Brahmins in the process of legitimizing its claim. It is even conceivable that the legitimizing role of Brahmins forced them to Sanskritize their style of life to a greater degree than would otherwise have been the case. In other words, Brahmin jatis in rural areas were subjected to opposite pulls: the tendency to imitate the locally dominant, non-Brahmin caste on the one hand and, to be Sanskritized enough to play their role as Brahmins on the other. Where Brahmins were divided into priestly and lay Brahmins, the legitimizing burden fell mainly on the former.

I have referred earlier to the Sanskritizing role of the great temples, monasteries, and pilgrim centres. All castes living within their cultural hinterland, including the dominant ones, were influenced by them. The local hierarchy of castes was not, then, entirely local. It was penetrated by the wider system, and the degree of penetration varied with the state of the roads in the region and the fame of the pilgrim centre.

In those areas where a highly Sanskritized caste was dominant, the culture of the entire region underwent a certain amount of Sanskritization. But in a highly stratified society such as India's, there were—and still are—obstacles to the free and unfettered taking over of the customs of the higher castes by the lower. Indeed, traditionally, the dominant caste punished those low castes which were presumptuous enough to attempt it. In spite of this there was a slow but steady seepage of the culture of the high castes to the low. The specific areas where this seepage occurred, and those which were immune to it, need to be identified in every region.

The mobility which was characteristic of the traditional system took mainly two forms: one in which a jati adopted, over a generation or two, the name and other attributes of regionally prestigious dominant caste which was not highly Sanskritized; and another, in which a jati called itself Brahmin or Kshatriya or Vaishya (usually with a prefix), and this was accompanied by appropriate changes in its diet, style of life, and rituals. The latter form became popular at

the beginning of the twentieth century, when there was an all-round increase in caste consciousness, and low castes sought to move up through Sanskritization. Soon they realized that the acquisition of education, and economic and political power, were far more important than Sanskritization in the struggle for upward mobility. In actual fact Sanskritization became easy once real power—economic and political—had been acquired.

British rule set in motion a vast number of forces which reacted with each other in a variety of ways and these forces continue to operate. Indian towns and cities, for instance, are centres not only of Westernization in all its aspects but also Sanskritic Hinduism and Sanskritization. In these cities are housed big temples, trained priests, Sanskrit schools and colleges, and printing presses where Sanskrit books and their translations into regional languages are printed. Again, it is in the towns and cities that reinterpreted Hinduism has found organizations such as Ramakrishna Mission, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, etc., and individuals to perpetuate it. *Bhajan* groups and the cult of saints, old and new, have their headquarters in the cities. In recent years there has also been a tendency for individuals in towns to undertake the performance of such revivalist functions as Vedic *yajnyas* (sacrifices) and drought-breaking prayers (*parjanya japa*).

It is pertinent to note in this connection that the discovery by the West of the richness, versatility, and vitality of Sanskrit literature and thought has had far-reaching effects in moulding modern India's ideas, attitudes, and values. The fact that India had a great civilization over two thousand years old gave Indians their much-needed self-confidence in facing up culturally and intellectually to the West, and politically to the British. The Bhagavad Gita was reinterpreted to provide a charter for social and political action which was indispensable if India had to become free and prosperous, and Indian society rid of its many evil and inhuman customs. Finally, certain values embedded in Sanskritic Hinduism, such as vegetarianism, and *ahimsa* (non-violence), appealed to Westernized Indians as worthy of perpetuation and extension to all sections of Indian society and even beyond. They found a powerful advocate in Mahatma Gandhi.

In a word, then, Sanskritic ideology, especially in its reinterpreted form, emerged as the most prestigious of indigenous ideologies. However, with the development of regional self-consciousness in the twentieth century there was an attempt in several Indian languages

to discard Sanskrit words and phrases. This 'purification' movement went furthest in Madras, where Sanskrit was identified with Brahmins, and Tamil with non-Brahmins; and Brahmins were made out to be Aryan invaders from the north, who were bent on suppressing the indigenous Dravidian culture. This view found powerful advocates in two organizations, the Dravida Kazhagam (DK or Dravidian Federation) and, its offshoot, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK or Dravidian Progressive Federation). Along with a great deal of obscurantism, parochialism, and incitement of hatred towards Brahmins, both organizations, and especially the DMK, propagated a rational outlook, and even atheism. Apart from Communism, this is the only rationalistic philosophy in India, and, unlike Communism, it is of indigenous origin.

There were other important, though indirect, sources of Sanskritization. The new economic opportunities brought about by British rule went, by and large, to the upper castes which had a literary tradition. This was partly due to the fact that knowledge of English was an essential qualification for employment as teachers, doctors, lawyers, clerks, and government officials. This increased further the cultural, if not the social distance, between the new elite and the 'backward' castes. Given, as the latter were, to looking up to and imitating the higher castes, they discovered that English education was essential if they had to acquire power and prestige in the new dispensation. But mastery of English was difficult for all, and even more so for those castes from the rural areas which had no literary tradition. It was at this juncture that the British started imparting power, in instalments, to Indians. The leaders of the 'backward' castes realized that the capture of the political power was essential and that it opened the door to education and employment. Thus began the 'Backward Classes Movement', which was, in a sense, an all-India phenomenon, though it found its strongest expression in peninsular India, where the cultural and social gulf between the Brahmins and others was more marked than elsewhere.

A crucial result of the Backward Classes Movement was to emphasize the role of secular factors in the upward mobility of caste groups and individuals. Implicit in such an emphasis was a downgrading of the importance of Sanskritization: it was something that followed on the acquisition of secular power and prestige. In the case of the dominant castes, there was no longer any desire to pass for the Vaishyas, Kshatriyas or Brahmins. On the contrary, it was prestigious to be a member of the dominant caste and groups which could in no

sense be regarded as sub-castes of the dominant caste tried to pass for the latter. In some areas, such as Gujarat, some dominant castes opened their ranks to lower castes in order to strengthen themselves politically. (It remains to be seen, however, whether and how far this will lead to the fusion of these castes.)

The overlap between the traditional high castes and the new elite was far from complete. There were instances, in many parts of the country, of low castes benefiting from the new economic opportunities. Such castes Sanskritized their style of life in the classical manner, and tried to pass for one of the 'twice-born' varnas. The example of these castes had a 'demonstration effect' on their neighbours. The urge for mobility became more widespread and the path to be taken well worn.

The Western discovery of the greatness of Sanskrit literature and thought, and the systematic reconstruction of Indian history, both played a vital role in the development of Indian nationalism. India was thought of as 'mother India', *Bharat Mata*, and patriotism was love for one's mother, freeing her from the thralldom of an alien ruler. Hindu symbolism expressed itself in political situations. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, for instance, the resisters (*satyagrahis*) were garlanded, their faces marked with *tilak*, and *arati*, a solution of turmeric and lime powder kept in a tray, was waved before them. Mahatma Gandhi expressed himself in a Hindu, even Sanskritic idiom—he saw the God Narayana as manifested in the poor (*daridranarayana*), the ideal millennium which he visualized for India was conceived of as *Rama Rajya* (the reign of the epic hero Rama, when there was justice and happiness for all), and he shared the Hindu veneration for the cow. Two of his central ideas, *satyagraha* or civil resistance, and *ahimsa* or non-violence, had their roots in Hindu and Jain customs and thought. Gandhi also preached vegetarianism and teetotalism.

Indian nationalism thus expressed itself predominantly in a Hindu idiom, and this was a factor, though only one, in non-Hindu groups experiencing a certain sense of isolation. It must be recalled here that since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hindu reformers worked hard to rid their religion of its many evils and to reinterpret it to suit the needs of a modern world. A certain amount of revivalism, or what appeared to be revivalism to non-Hindus, was part of this process of reinterpretation, though it was much greater in some reform movements than in the other. Similar 'revivalism' was present among the Muslims.

It was not only at the national level that there was increased self-consciousness, but also at other levels; in religion, sect, caste, language,

and region. One of the results of this heightened self-consciousness was 'communalism', the setting up of the interests of one's 'community' (i.e., religious group) before that of the nation as a whole. This was further complicated by the presence of an alien ruler. Hindu communalism stimulated Muslim communalism and *vice versa*, and a vicious spiralling of hatred followed. The partition of the Indian subcontinent was perhaps the inevitable result of such a process.

One of the most important tasks which confronts independent India is to draw all sections of India's heterogeneous population into the mainstream of national life while at the same time retaining what is valuable in Sanskrit thought and culture. To do this it is necessary for Hindus to accept the entire Indian tradition to which all sections of the population have contributed, and for the latter to regard the Sanskrit heritage as their own. This can only be the result of a slow process of cultural osmosis, and in this context it is significant that independent India has declared itself a secular state, while Pakistan is an 'Islamic Republic'. Tolerance and mutual appreciation of values among India's religious groups are made easier by India opting for secularism.

Yet another problem, and one whose existence the intellectuals of modern India fail to acknowledge, is the reality of a long-term conflict between Sanskritization and Westernization. Such a conflict is bound to become sharper as industrialization and Westernization increase and education is extended to all classes. The conflict between a religious and scientific worldview is only one aspect of this conflict, which is not peculiar to Hinduism but common to all religions.

Notes

1. It is interesting to note that Professor Chatterjee used the term 'Sanskritization' as far back as 1950. At that time he was not aware of my use of the term. I used it for the first time in 1947 in my D. Phil. thesis, and this was not published until 1952.
2. See, 'The Kaveri Myth', in Srinivas 1952: 213-18.
3. One of the literary products of the movement is a play called *Keemayanam* in which the tables are turned on the epic hero Rama and his followers. The performance of this play has been banned in Tamil Nadu State on the ground that it offends the religious susceptibilities of large numbers of Hindus.
4. See, in this connection, Srinivas 1966: chap. I, and also my essay 'Mobility in the Caste System', which appears as chap. 10 in this volume.
5. For attempts at such analysis, see, Srinivas 1966: chaps III and IV.

Reading 7/11/22

READING-15

Agrarian Structures and Their Transformations

SURINDER JODHKA

All economic activity is carried out in a framework of social relationships. Production is organized socially; markets function as social institutions, and consumption patterns are shaped by social norms and cultural values. Agriculture is no exception. The institutional framework of agricultural production determines how and by whom land is cultivated, what kinds of crops can be produced and for what purpose, how food and agricultural incomes can be distributed, and in what way or on what terms the agrarian sector is linked to rest of the economy/society.

However, agrarian structures and their transformations have not been the major concern of sociologists and social anthropologists. Western sociology, since the days of its classical traditions, has remained preoccupied with the study of social life in urban-industrial societies. As Shanin rightly points out, in its most fundamental self-image, the western capitalist world defined itself as a 'world without peasants'. The division of societies into 'modern' and 'backward' in the evolutionist schema of early social theory also meant that conceptually the agrarian populations, or the peasants, were reduced to an unspecified part of the mixed bag of 'remainders of the past' (Shanin 1987: 468).

In their search for 'pure' and 'primitive' cultures, early practitioners of social anthropology—the discipline that was supposed to study 'pre-modern' societies—invariably chose the pre-agrarian 'tribal/folk communities' for their field studies. Even when they began to look at the 'village', they viewed it as a closed, unchanging community of 'ascriptive groupings' organized around a normative belief system that essentialized it into an 'oppositional other' of the western type of modern urban societies (Inden 1990).

It was outside the mainstream western tradition of social sciences, in peripheral eastern and central Europe, that the 'agrarian question' became important on the political and intellectual agenda. The famous debate between the populist thinkers led by the Russian economist Chayanov (1887) on the one side, and the Marxist class analyses of the Russian countryside by Lenin (1899; 1903) along with Kautsky's work on the 'agrarian question' (Banaji 1976) on the other, laid the foundation of what later came to be known as 'agrarian studies'.

Though the 'Russian debate' during the early twentieth century made substantial contributions to the field, 'agrarian studies' could really take off only after the Second World War. The emergence of the 'new states' following decolonization during the post-War period played an important role in changing the research agenda of the social sciences. The most characteristic

feature of the newly emerged 'Third World' countries was the dependence of large proportions of their populations on a 'stagnant' agrarian sector. The struggle for freedom from colonial rule had also developed new aspirations among the 'masses' and the 'elites' of these societies. In some of these struggles, the peasantry had played a crucial role. Thus the primary agenda for the new political regimes was the transformation of their 'backward' and stagnant economies. Though the strategies and priorities differed, 'modernization' and 'development' became common programmes in most Third World countries. It was in this historical context that 'development studies' emerged as one of the most important areas of interest in the global academy.

Since a large majority of the populations in Third World societies were directly dependent on agriculture, understanding the prevailing structures of agrarian relations and working out ways and means of transforming them emerged as important priorities within 'development studies'. Western political interest in the rural inhabitants of the Third World and the growing influence of modernization and development theories also brought with them a good deal of funding for the study of peasant economies and societies (Silverman 1987: 11). It was at this time that the concept of 'peasantry' found currency in the discipline of social anthropology. At a time when primitive tribes were either in the process of disappearing or had already disappeared, the 'discovery' of the peasantry provided a vast new field of investigation to the discipline of social anthropology. (Béteille 1974b: 40).

As distinct from the isolated 'primitive communities' of tribal society, peasant communities were defined as 'part societies with part cultures' (Kroeber 1948). Redfield (1965) argued that peasant societies had similarities all over the world. He particularly emphasized their attachment to land and the pursuit of agriculture as a way of life. Peasant societies, unlike tribal communities, also produced a surplus that was generally transferred to a dominant group of rulers in the city (Wolf 1966: 4). Thus peasant society could not be seen as self-sufficient and isolated, for it was the surplus produced by peasants that partially supported the activities of rulers.

Corresponding to the idea of the peasantry having something generic about it, Shanin offered an 'ideal type' of peasant society with the following features. First, the peasant family was the basic unit of production and consumption in a multidimensional social organization. Second, land husbandry was the major means of livelihood. Third, there was a distinct traditional culture linked to the way of life of peasant communities. Fourth, an elite living outside the community dominated the peasantry (Shanin 1987: 3-5).

Whereas peasants were by definition pre-modern and hence were primarily seen as 'subject matter' for social anthropologists, or later for those in 'development studies', 'rural sociology' had come into existence in the United States much before peasant studies became popular. The civil war in the late nineteenth century and the ensuing 'farm crisis' saw the emergence of farmers' organizations demanding federal aid to solve the problems of rural areas afflicted by severe depression. Rural sociology, as an applied discipline, came into existence essentially in response to this crisis (Newby 1980: 10).

The main concern of 'rural sociology' came to be the understanding and diagnosing of the social and economic problems of farmers. More emphasis was placed on issues such as the internal structures of 'community life' and the changing composition of rural populations (Schwarzweiller 1984: xi) than on their relationships with land or the social aspects of agricultural production. Theoretically, rural sociology remained caught up in bipolar notions of social change, where 'rural' often got defined as the opposite of 'urban'. 'Rurality' was conceptualized as an autonomous sociological reality (Bonnano 1989). The identification of 'rural sociology'

with 'rural society' has also raised questions about its relevance in the western context where no rural areas were left anymore and almost the entire population had become urbanized (Friedland 1982: 590).

In response to these critiques of rural sociology, a new sub-discipline of sociology emerged that operated largely within the functionalist paradigm and was preoccupied with the study of the community life of rural people. This sub-discipline, known as sociology of agriculture, focused its attention on understanding and analysing the social framework of agricultural production and the structures of relations centred around land (Friedland 1989). It raised questions about how and on what terms the agrarian sector was being integrated into the system of commodity production and about the unequal distribution of agricultural incomes and food among the different social categories of people (Friedland 1989; 1984). The sociology of agriculture also distinguished itself from 'peasant studies' on the grounds that its focus was on capitalist farming, where the production was primarily for the market, not on peasants producing for their own consumption by using family labour. Thus, it claimed more kinship with the tradition of the 'political economy' of agriculture or 'agrarian studies'. At the methodological level, historical inquiries became as relevant as ethnographic/empirical studies. This conceptual shift during the early 1970s also helped in bringing sociologists working on agrarian issues in the western countries closer to those concerned with agrarian transformations in the Third World.

This chapter is an attempt to look at the Indian agrarian context broadly from the perspective of the 'sociology of agriculture'. Though the focus is on the contemporary agrarian scene, I approach it from a historical perspective.

THE INDIAN CONTEXT

The Indian agrarian context occupies special status, both in the social scientific literature on India and in the literature on agrarian societies in general. However, unlike studies on caste, kinship, village community, or, more recently, gender, study of agrarian relations did not occupy a central position in Indian sociology. Though some sociologists, particularly those working on developmental issues, were writing on agrarian issues, it was with the publication of André Beteille's *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* in 1974 that 'agrarian sociology' gained professional respectability within the two disciplines.

'Peasant studies', in a way, arrived in India with 'village studies'. The vastly influential collection of essays, *Village India*, edited by Marriott (1955) with its emphasis on 'little communities' and 'great communities' was brought out under the direct supervision of Robert Redfield. It is therefore interesting to see Beteille's (1974b) critique of the assumption that the village in India could conceptually be equated to peasant communities in Europe. Beteille pointed out that the Indian village was characterized by a baffling variety of land relations and a complex hierarchy of ownership rights over land. By defining 'little communities' not in relation to land but through other social institutions, such as kinship, religion, and the social organization of caste, there was a shift away from looking at the rural population in relation to agriculture and land (there were some notable exceptions to this broad trend such as Bailey 1958; Gough 1955; Mukherjee 1971). Caste hierarchy came to be defined in terms of ritual or social interaction over institutions of commensality and marriage. Nearly universal acceptance of functionalism among the social anthropologists of the 1950s made them overemphasize the need to understand what produced social order. Even when they found evidence to show that

neither the village nor the caste system was an unchanging reality, it was not reflected in the overall picture of the village that they presented (Jodhka 1998). There was a perceived dualism in thinking on caste and class. Studies of land and agriculture came to be associated with the domain of economics while the sociologist/social anthropologist specialized in caste (Béteille 1974a: 7-34).

Much before village studies were initiated by professional anthropologists during the early 1950s, social life in the Indian village and its agrarian structures were extensively documented by colonial ethnographers, though, as with many other practices of colonial historiography, the accounts were written in a manner that justified colonial subjugation of India (Cohn 1987: 212). Along with the earlier writings of James Mill, Charles Metcalfe's notion of the 'Indian village community' set the tone for much of the later writing on rural India. Metcalfe, in a celebrated remark, stated that:

the village communities are little Republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty rumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Mahratta, Sikh, English are masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same [quoted in Cohn 1987: 213].

This construction emphasized the fact that these communities were harmonious, relatively isolated, and, above all, unchanging, thus blocking from view the impoverishment caused by colonial policies. Perhaps the most critical element of this construct was the assumption about the absence of private ownership of land; land was thought to be owned by the village community collectively. Since there had been no private rights over land, the British believed that there would have been no significant economic differentiation in the Indian village.

Later historical research in different regions of pre-colonial India has convincingly shown that this was at best a superficial understanding of the Indian village. Since land was in abundant supply, there was no sale or purchase of land in most parts of the Indian countryside. However, not everyone had equal rights of cultivation or claims over land produce: these were instead based upon custom or upon grants made by the king (Neale 1962: 21). Irfan Habib, writing on the Mughal period, points out that these rights could even be purchased and sold (Habib 1963: 154). The village did not hold its land in common. Common were its officials and servants' (Neale 1962: 21).

Historians have also gathered enough evidence to show that claims that the Indian village was internally undifferentiated, self-sufficient, and stable were incorrect. According to Irfan Habib, during the Mughal period of Indian history

economic differentiation had progressed considerably among the peasantry. There were large cultivators, using hired labour, and raising crops for the market, and there were small peasants, who could barely produce food grains for their own subsistence. Beyond this differentiation among the peasantry, there was still sharper division between the caste peasantry and the 'menial' population (Habib 1982: 247).

Dharma Kumar also argues that there was a sizeable population of those who primarily worked as agricultural labourers in pre-colonial south India and generally belonged to some specific caste group (Kumar: 1992).

The village was linked to the central authority through the revenue bureaucracy. Land revenue worked as the dominant mode of surplus appropriation during 'medieval' times. Mughal authorities discriminated between the classes of landowners while fixing the revenue demands.

The larger landholders, such as *zamindars*, headmen or a favoured community, were required to pay less per unit (Kumar 1992: 239-40).

Pre-colonial agrarian relations were also not free of conflicts and tensions. Whenever the revenue demands became unbearable, the typical response of the peasantry was to flee en masse to other territories where conditions were more conducive to land cultivation (Habib 1963; Moore 1966: 332). There were also instances of the peasantry revolting against local rulers. Most of these revolts, however, were unorganized, inspired by some religious ideology or a millenarian dream (Dhanagare 1983: 29).

The notion of the '*jajmani* system' was also popularized by the colonial cartography. It tended to conceptualize agrarian social structure in the framework of exchange relations. In its classical construct, different caste groups specialized in specific occupations and exchanged their services through an elaborate system of division of labour. Though asymmetry in position of various caste groups was recognized, what it emphasized was not inequality in rights over land but the spirit of community. For instance, Wiser argued, 'Each served the other. Each in turn was master. Each in turn was servant. This system of inter relatedness in service within Hindu community was called the Hindu Jajmani system' (Wiser 1969: xxi). Central to such a construction of exchange is the idea of 'reciprocity' (Gouldner 1973: 173-220) with the implicit or explicit assumption that it was a non-exploitative system where mutual gratification was supposed to be the outcome of the reciprocal exchange (Bhattacharya 1983: 114-15).

How far is this construct correct? Later research has questioned the assumption that jajmani relations were non-exploitative. On the contrary, it has been argued that the dominant landlords used the system of hereditary obligations and occupational duties to perpetuate and legitimize the local variety of pre-capitalist/feudalistic relations (Beidelman 1959:6; Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1976:42). Moreover, what was projected as a pan-Indian reality that had been in practice since antiquity was only a local system confined to northern parts of India with a rather short history (Mayer 1993).

AGRARIAN CHANGES DURING COLONIAL RULE

Apart from theories on the Indian village produced by the colonial empire, British rule also had far-reaching material effects on the Indian countryside. It may however be relevant to stress that although British colonial rule had a significant impact on the village economy, the initial representation of the village as having been unchanging and static in earlier periods does not stand up to historical scrutiny.

After having established its political supremacy, the colonial regime initiated the task of reorganizing local society in a framework that would make governance easy and manageable. This process began with the introduction of new property rights in land. The first, and historically the most controversial, was the Permanent Settlement introduced in Bengal in 1793. Under this the intermediary zamindars (the tax-collecting officials in the earlier regime) were granted ownership rights over lands from which they previously only had the rights to collect revenues. Moore argues that apart from simplifying things, the colonial rulers saw in the local zamindars a counterpart of the 'enterprising English landlord', who, they believed, had the capacity to 'establish prosperous cultivation' if provided with secure and permanent ownership rights over land (Moore 1966: 345). Others have argued that the Permanent Settlement also had politico-strategic implications, for in the landlord the British rulers saw a possible support base in local society (Desai 1976: 39).

At least during the initial years, for the peasantry the new system just meant an increase in revenue demands. The additional economic burden also weakened the 'traditional' structure of patron-client relations between the zamindars and the local tenants, leading to a disintegration of what Scott calls 'the moral economy of the peasantry' (Scott 1976). Contrary to the expectations of the colonial rulers, Permanent Settlement accelerated and intensified the trend towards 'parasitic landlordism' (Moore 1966: 346). By the middle of the nineteenth century the entire area under Permanent Settlement was in a state of crisis.

Learning from the Bengal experience, the colonial regime tried a new arrangement in the regions of Madras, Bombay, and Berar. This came to be known as the *ryotwari* system. Under this, the actual landholders (*ryots*) were given formal proprietary rights. The ryot in theory was a tenant of the state, responsible for paying revenue directly to the state treasury, and could not be evicted as long as he paid his revenue (Baden-Powell 1892: 126). Stokes argues that the growing influence of Utilitarian philosophy in England during the time also produced distaste for landlordism and led to the introduction of new systems of revenue assessments (Stokes 1978).

Another variety of land settlement known as *mahalwari* or *malguzari* was introduced in the United Provinces, Punjab, and the Central Provinces. Under this, the village was identified as the unit of assessment. As such the mahalwari system was not very different from the ryotwari. Effective ownership of the cultivated land was vested in the cultivator here as well, but the revenue was collectively paid by the village. A villager of 'good social standing' was generally given the responsibility of collecting the revenue from individual cultivators and paying the assessment on behalf of the village.

Despite differences in arrangement, the patterns of change experienced in land relations were more or less similar in most parts of the empire. Though the new settlements changed the formal structures of authority, the colonial policies also reinforced and revitalized older, 'quasi-feudal' structures which for the peasant meant 'not less but in many cases more intensive and systematic exploitation' (Guha 1983: 7). The new land revenue systems also forced the peasants to become increasingly involved with the market, even when they did not have the capacity to produce surplus.

Commercialization of Agriculture

The expression 'commercialization of agriculture' is used to describe two related processes: first, a shift in the agrarian economy from production for consumption to production for the market; and second, a process where land starts acquiring the features of a commodity and begins to be sold and purchased in the market, like other commodities.

Though it grew both quantitatively as well as qualitatively during British rule, production for the market was not an entirely new phenomenon for Indian agriculture. As Habib points out, the big peasants during the Mughal period produced cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, and sugar cane (Habib 1982). However, these markets were generally local in nature and the demand for such things was limited. Establishment of colonial rule changed the entire scenario. The laying of the railways and the opening of the Suez canal made the Indian village a part of the global market.

The Industrial Revolution in England around the same time generated fresh demands for some specific agricultural products required as raw material in the new industries. The manifold increase in the land revenue at the same time compelled the peasantry to shift to crops that had better market value, which effectively meant switching over from food crops to

cash crops. According to one estimate, in Rayalseema region of southern India, the area devoted to food crops declined from 78.2 per cent in 1901-4, to 58.2 per cent in 1937-49, while at the other end it increased from 17.0 per cent to 30.1 per cent for cash crops during the same period (Satyanarayana 1991: 57). Similarly, from the state of Punjab a large proportion of food and non-food crops began to be exported. While there was a rapid increase in the agricultural production of the region from 1921 onwards, the per capita output of food crops experienced a decline. According to the estimates made by G. Blyn for the entire country, exportable commercial crops grew more than ten times faster at 1.31 per cent annually, compared to only 0.11 per cent increase per annum for foodgrains from 1894 to 1947. He also estimated that per head availability of foodgrains declined by 25 per cent during the inter-War period. This decline was highest in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa at 38 per cent, while the relatively prosperous state of Punjab also saw a decline of 18 per cent (Blyn 1966).

One obvious consequence of this shift in cropping patterns and a growing involvement of the peasantry in the market was a significant increase in the vulnerability of local populations to famines. Forced commercialization of agriculture disintegrated the traditional systems of food security. India experienced a number of serious famines, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. According to an estimate, 3.5 to 4 million people (one-tenth to one-eighth of the total population of the region) perished during the 1876-8 famine in parts of southern India (Kumar 1982: 231).

Similarly Bengal was transformed from a prosperous region to a region with frequent famines. In one of its worst famines during 1943-4, nearly 3.5 million people died. Though the official reports and 'inquiries' by colonial rulers attributed these famines to scarcity of food due to crop failures, the per capita availability of food in Bengal in the year 1943 was not substantially different from the previous year and there were no widespread crop failures in 1942 (Sen 1976; Greenough 1982).

According to Sen (1976) it was not the scarcity of food but the changes in the 'exchange entitlements' that caused the 1943 Bengal famine. The year 1942-3 saw unprecedented inflation, mainly resulting from War expenditure, and the absolute level of prices moved rapidly upward. But the prices of different commodities did not move in the same way. While food prices went up, wage rates, particularly of rural unskilled labour, remained low. This was reinforced in certain regions of Bengal by a direct decline in employment arising from loss of agricultural activity due to cyclonic destruction, making the exchange entitlements worse for certain groups. While some classes benefited from the incomes newly created by the war economy, others faced higher prices of food without a corresponding rise in their monetary incomes and therefore starved (Sen: 1976; 1977). Greenough adds that there were also some cultural patterns specific to Bengal which explain the selective starvation and death during the famines. There was cultural acceptance in Bengali society of 'abandoning' those dependents who were deemed inessential for the reconstitution of family and society in the post-crisis period and of protecting those whose survival was held essential for the future (Greenough 1982: 265).

Commodification of Land

While the new land settlements conferred formal and transferable/alienable rights over land, the growing revenue demands and the increasing market orientation of agricultural production created conditions under which land began to acquire the features of a commodity. The new administrative and judicial system also introduced laws against defaults of legal dues that included default of rent, revenue, and debts. The moneylender, who until then lent keeping a

peasant's crops in mind, began to see his land as a mortgageable asset against which he could lend money. Further, an increase in population during the nineteenth century made good-quality cultivable land scarce.

Apart from an absolute increase in population, colonial rule also led to what has been called the 'de-industrialization' of the Indian economy. Displacement of the native rulers after the conquest of India by the East India Company resulted in a sudden and almost complete collapse of old urban handicrafts in the absence of patronage. The influx of cheap machine-made goods from England after the Industrial Revolution hastened this process. Economic ruination of urban and village artisans increased the pressure on land considerably (Gadgil 1933). The net result was an ever-growing burden of debt for a majority of peasants.

Indebtedness as such was not an entirely new thing for the Indian peasant. Moneylenders as a distinct social category had always been a part of village social life. In most regions, they existed as a separate caste group. Whenever the peasant's stocks finished, he could go to the *sahukar* (moneylender) for a loan of grain. The local *sahukar* was also the customary source for peasants who generally needed an occasional loan. He was more of a functional category, a 'crude balance wheel to even out periods of scarcity and prosperity' (Moore 1966: 358). He evaluated the creditworthiness of a particular peasant on the basis of his ability to pay back, and decided on how much could be advanced to a particular peasant. The prevailing system of credit was perhaps close to what Weber conceptualized as 'neighborhood help' (Weber 1978: 361).

As land became both scarce and transferable, and the economic environment began to change, the moneylender started advancing much more than before, provided the peasant was willing to offer his land as guarantee against a possible default. At this stage rich landowners also entered the credit market, more with the intention of usurping the lands of smaller peasants than to earn interest. Thus began the process of 'land alienation'.

Land alienation was a pan-Indian development irrespective of the system of revenue settlement: zamindari, ryotwari, or mahalwari (Dhanagare 1983). This impoverished the small and, often also, the middle peasant, and strengthened the position of big landowners and moneylenders in rural society. The professional moneylender generally did not evict the peasant from his land. If the peasant could not pay back his loan, the moneylender asked for the transfer of ownership rights over land while the peasant continued cultivating land, but as a tenant of the moneylender. Where moneylenders were also landlords, the indebted peasant could end up being a landless labourer. Thus tenancy as well as landlessness grew significant in most parts of the British empire. According to one estimate, out of the total population of male agricultural labourers in the state of Punjab, the proportion of those coming from peasant and landowning castes went up from 0.8 per cent in 1911 to as much as 29.7 per cent in 193 (Bhattacharya 1985: 146). Similarly, in the case of Orissa, Bailey argues that once a market in land developed, peasants began to sell their lands whenever they were faced with a 'contingent need' (Bailey 1958).

Peasant indebtedness and land alienation acquired such gigantic proportions that even the colonial administrators began to see this as 'a problem' (Darling 1947; Thorburn 1982). Reports on growing discontent among the peasantry from different parts of the empire added to their worries. The Deccan riots of 1875 only confirmed these apprehensions. Colonial rule responded to the growing unrest in the countryside by passing legislations such as the Deccan Relief Act of 1879 and the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1901. The main thrust of the

legislative measures was to stop the transfers of agricultural land to members of non-agricultural castes. However, in the absence of any significant change in the revenue structure or in the overall politico-ideological framework of colonial rule, these legislative measures hardly brought any relief to the peasantry. For the poor peasants the only difference these measures made was that they now had to depend more on the credit of the richer landowners from the cultivating castes. The discontent among the peasantry continued to grow and expressed itself in a series of revolts and protest movements, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century.

The study of these movements became quite popular in the 1970s and 1980s. While scholars such as Desai (1979), Gough (1979), and Dhanagare (1983) explored these mobilizations from the conventional perspectives of social movements and Marxist class analysis, the famous 'Subaltern Studies' pioneered by Guha (1982) raised the issue of the relationship between peasant mobilizations and the nationalist movement. These studies questioned the dominant historiographies of the colonial period, which tended to subsume the politics of the peasantry within the broader framework of the nationalist struggle led by middle-class elite, thereby erasing the question of the agency of the subaltern classes. Guha argued for a perspective that gave autonomy to peasant consciousness and looked at the 'politics of the people' independently of the domain of elite politics.

The question, 'What did the agrarian policies of the colonial rulers do to the Indian village?' has most frequently been raised by Marxist scholars. Marx himself had almost celebrated the colonial conquest of India, which he thought would break the earlier stagnant system and help private property relations, and hence contradictions, to grow in Indian society. Though guided by its own 'vilest' self-interest, Marx argued that British rule was responsible for 'causing a social revolution in Hindustan' (Marx 1959: 18). Some later Marxists have also argued that high indebtedness of the peasantry, forced commercialization of agricultural produce, land alienation, and increasing domination of rich landowners and moneylenders over tenants and peasants was a specific form of 'the primitive accumulation of capital' which, in the ultimate analysis, led to 'a formal subsumption of labour under capital' (Alavi 1990; Fox 1987).

More popular has been the thesis of 'conservation-dissolution', which is that while colonial rule destroyed some of the local pre-capitalist structures, it also preserved many. As Patnaik argues, colonial rule 'broke down' the earlier structures without 'reconstituting' them, and 'bourgeois property relations' developed without a corresponding 'development of capitalist relations of production' in Indian agriculture (Patnaik 1990: 41). In certain cases, colonial rule in fact introduced semi-feudal relations to perpetuate itself. 'Unlike its parent mode of production in the West, distinguished historically by its continuous expansion of the productive forces, the mode of production installed in the colonies reduced the entire process of production to an immense super exploitation of the variable capital' (Banaji 1990: 126). The colonial West reinforced 'backward relations of exploitation' and transmitted to its colonies the pressures of the accumulation process in the metropolis without unleashing any corresponding expansion in the forces of production (Banaji 1990: 126). Alavi also argued that colonial or 'peripheral capitalism' was not the same as 'metropolitan capitalism'. While it was an integrated process of development in the West, 'peripheral capitalism brought about a disarticulated form of generalized commodity production' because the surplus generated in agriculture was reinvested not in the local economy but in the metropolitan centres (Alavi 1990: 170). Though with a different emphasis, Guha too argued that the fusing of landlordism and usury by colonial rule made a possible development of capitalism difficult both in agriculture and in industry. However,

unlike Alavi, Guha emphasizes that the composite apparatus of dominance over peasantry and their subjection to the triumvirate—*sarkari* (of the state), *sahukari* (of the moneylender), and *zamindari* (of the landlord)—was primarily a political fact (Guha 1983: 8).

AGRARIAN CHANGES AFTER INDEPENDENCE

In many ways, independence from colonial rule in 1947 marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of Indian agriculture. Having evolved out of a long struggle against colonial rule with the participation of the people from various social categories, the Indian state also took over the task of supervising the transformation of its stagnant and backward economy to make sure that the benefits of economic growth were not monopolized entirely by a particular section of society. It is with this background that 'development' emerged as a strategy of economic change and an ideology of the new regime.

However, even though the political system had changed in a very fundamental sense, at a micro level the structures that evolved during colonial rule still continued to exist. The local interests that had emerged over a long period of time continued to be powerful in the Indian countryside even after the political climate had changed. Speaking at the Delhi School of Economics in 1955 after his extensive trips to different parts of independent India, Daniel Thorner was among the first to conceptualize this fact. He argued that the earlier structure of land relations and debt dependencies, where a small section consisting of a few landlords and moneylenders (who usually belonged to the local upper castes) were dominant, continued to prevail in the Indian countryside. The nature of property relations, the local values that related social prestige negatively to physical labour, and the absence of any surplus with the actual cultivator for investment on land ultimately perpetuated stagnation. 'This complex of legal, economic, and social relations uniquely typical of the Indian countryside served to produce an effect' that Thorner described as 'a built-in depressor' (Thorner 1956: 12). Thorner's formulation was, in a sense, symptomatic of the way in which agrarian issues began to be framed in the context of development studies and modernization of agriculture debates.

Land Reforms

The 'agrarian question' had also been an important topic of discussion for leaders of the Indian freedom movement, starting with Ranade and Dutt, who extensively wrote and debated on how Indian society and economy ought to be reorganized after independence from colonial rule (see Joshi 1987). The 'land question' had become one of the most hotly debated topics during the final years of the struggle for Independence.

Land reforms also became a question of considerable academic interest and debate in the discourse about planning and development. They were viewed as necessary for initiating modernization in agriculture. While there was a general agreement that the prevailing agrarian structures, marked by absentee landlordism and semi-feudal relations of production, needed to be reorganized, two extreme positions were taken on the following crucial questions: 'What kind of agrarian reforms are required and which would work the best?' and 'Is there an economic logic behind land reforms?' The competing answers to the latter question came to be known as the 'farm size-productivity' debate.

The first view was that of the 'institutionalists', who argued that the way out for Indian agriculture lay in a radical reorganization of land-ownership patterns that would not only democratize the village and revive the independent 'peasant economy', but also increase the

productivity of land. Thus the slogan, 'land to the tiller' (Thorner 1956; Herring 1983). They also argued that smaller-sized holdings gave higher productivity (see Herring 1983: 239-67). The second viewpoint argued against the redistribution of land on the grounds that it was both unviable, as not enough land was available for everyone, and that it worked against the logic of 'economics'. The modernization of agriculture, it was argued, required landlords' reorientation. They needed to be motivated to cultivate their own land with wage labour and using modern technology. The land reforms, according to them, would only divide the land into 'unviable holdings', rendering them unfeasible for the use of modern technology (Bauer and Yamey 1957; Lewis 1963). Speaking from a very different position, some Marxist scholars also argued against the 'institutionalists' who reminded them of the neo-populist Narodniks of Russia. They thought that the argument in favour of small farms emanated from the Chayanovian logic of the peasant economy, which was in their view historically untenable (Patnaik 1972).

However, the process of agrarian reforms is inherently a political question (Ghose 1984:6) and not a purely technical or economic one. The choices made by the Indian state and the actual implementation of land reforms were determined by the 'politics' of the new regime rather than by the theoretical superiority of a particular position. The Indian state chose to reorganize agrarian relations through redistribution of land, but not in a comprehensive and radical manner. Joshi described it as 'sectorial or sectional reforms' (Joshi 1987: 56). The Government of India directed its states to abolish intermediary tenures, regulate rent and tenancy rights, confer ownership rights on tenants, impose ceilings on holdings, distribute the surplus land among the rural poor, and facilitate consolidation of holdings. A large number of legislations were passed by the state governments over a short period of time. The number of these legislations was so large that, according to Thorner, they could be 'the largest body of agrarian legislations to have been passed in so brief a span of years in any country whose history has been recorded' (Thorner 1956: 14).

The actual implementation of these legislations and their impact on the agrarian structure is, however, an entirely different story. Most of the legislations had intentionally provided loopholes that allowed the dominant landowners to tamper with land records by redistributing land among relatives—at least on papers—evicting their tenants, and using other means to escape the legislations. In the absence of a concerted 'political will' (Joshi 1976), land reforms could succeed only in regions where the peasantry was politically mobilized and could exert pressure from below (Radhakrishnan 1989).

Despite overall failure, land reforms succeeded in weakening the hold of absentee landlords over rural society and assisted in the emergence of a 'class of substantial peasants and petty landlords as the dominant political and economic group' (Bell 1974: 196). In a village of Rajasthan, for example, though the 'abolition of *jagirs*' (intermediary rights) was far from satisfactory, it made considerable difference to the overall landownership patterns and to the local and regional power structures. The Rajputs, the erstwhile landlords, possessed much less land after the land reforms than they did before. Most of the village land had moved into the hands of those who could be called small and medium landowners. In qualitative terms, most of the land began to be self-cultivated and the incidence of tenancy declined considerably (Chakravarti 1975: 97-8). The fear of losing land induced many potential losers to sell or rearrange their lands in a manner that escaped legislations (Byres 1974).

However, it was only in rare cases that the landless labourers living in the countryside, most of whom belonged to the ex-'untouchable' castes, received land. The beneficiaries, by and large, belonged to middle-level caste groups who traditionally cultivated land as a part of

the calling of their castes. Otherwise also the holding structure continued to be fairly iniquitous though the proportion of smaller and medium-size landowners has been expanding (see Table 1).

Provision of Institutional Credit

While land reforms were supposed to deal with the problem of landlordism, the hold of moneylenders over the peasantry was to be weakened by providing credit through institutional sources, initially by credit societies and later, by the nationalized commercial banks.

According to the findings of an official survey carried out immediately after Independence from colonial rule, up to approximately 91 per cent of the credit needs of cultivators were being met by informal sources of credit (RBI 1969: 15). Much of this came from usurious moneylenders (69.7 per cent). It was in recognition of this fact that the Indian state planned to expand the network of cooperative credit societies. With the imposition of 'social control' and later their nationalization, commercial banks were also asked to lend to the agricultural sector on priority basis. Over the years, the dependence of rural households on informal sources has come down significantly. While in 1961, an average of only 18.4 per cent of the total credit needs were being fulfilled by institutional sources of credit, in 1981 the corresponding figure had risen to 62.6 per cent (Gadgil 1986: 296).

However, this is not the entire story. The assessment studies on the cooperative credit societies showed that much of their credit went to the relatively better off sections of rural society, and the poor continued to depend on the more expensive informal sources (Thorner 1964; Oommen 1984). This was explained as a consequence of the prevailing structure of land tenures (Herring 1977). The state response was to bureaucratize the cooperative societies. Though in some regions this helped in releasing credit societies from the hold of big landowners, bureaucratization also led to rampant corruption and increasing apathy among those whom they were supposed to serve (Jodhka 1995a). Although banks were never controlled directly by the rural rich, the benefit of their credit has largely gone to those who had substantial holdings (Jodhka 1995b). Yet, despite this inherent bias of institutional credit against the rural poor, its availability played an important role in making the green revolution a success, and it definitely helped to marginalize the professional moneylender in the rural power structure.

Community Development Programme (CDP)

As a strategy of development, the CDP was conceptually very different from both land reforms and the idea of making cheap institutional credit available to cultivators. While the earlier programmes reflected an 'institutionalist' perspective, the CDP had emanated from the 'productionist' approach to rural development. It had been inspired by the agricultural extension service in the United States (Dube 1958: 8) and was based on a notion of the harmonious village community without any significant internal differences and conflict of interests (Dhanagare 1984). There was hardly any mention of the unequal power relations in the village. Its objective was to provide a substantial increase in agricultural production and improvement in basic services, which would ultimately lead to a transformation in the social and economic life of the village (Dube 1958). Its basic assumption was that 'the Indian peasant would of his own free will, and because of his "felt needs", immediately adopt technical improvements the moment he was shown them' (Moore 1966: 401).

The Programme was launched on 2 October 1952 in a few selected 'blocks' and it was soon extended to the entire country. However, the enthusiasm with which the Programme was

started could not be sustained. A non-political approach to agrarian transformation resulted in helping only those who were already powerful in the village. Most of the benefits were cornered by a small section of the rural elite.

THE GREEN REVOLUTION AND AFTER

Of all the developmental programmes introduced during the post-Independence period, the green revolution is considered to have been the most successful. It was celebrated the world over and has been studied and debated quite extensively in academia. The green revolution led to a substantial increase in agricultural output, to the extent that it almost solved India's food problem. It also produced significant social and political changes in the Indian village and, in a sense, did bring about an 'agricultural revolution'. In purely economic terms, the agricultural sector experienced growth at the rate of 3 to 5 per cent per annum (Byres 1972), which was many times more than what the rate of growth had been during the colonial period (less than 1 per cent).

The green revolution conceptualized agrarian change in purely technological terms and was based on the 'trickle down' theory of economic growth. The expression 'green revolution' was deliberately coined to contrast it with the phrase 'red revolution'. It carried the conviction that 'agriculture was being peacefully transformed through the quiet working of science and technology, reaping the economic gains of modernization while avoiding the social costs of mass upheaval and disorder usually associated with rapid change' (Frankel 1971: V). The United States played an active role in its conception and implementation. Many have argued that this was because of the strategic, geopolitical interests that the US had at the time in the changing social and economic conditions in the countries of the Third World (Harriss 1987).

The term 'green revolution' had been first used during the late 1960s to refer to the effects of the introduction of higher yielding variety (HYV) seeds of wheat and rice in developing countries. However, the green revolution was not just about the use of HYV seed. It was a package. The new varieties of seeds required fertility-enhancing inputs, i.e. chemical fertilizers, controlled irrigation conditions, and plant-protecting chemicals (pesticides). The other components of the package consisted of providing cheap institutional credit, price incentives, and marketing facilities. In order to back up the application of new technology on local farms, a large number of agricultural universities were also opened in the regions selected for the new programme. It was under the direct supervision of the Ford Foundation that the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) was started in 1961. Initially the IADP operated in 14 districts on an experimental basis; it was later extended to 114 districts (out of a total of 325) under the name of the Intensive Agriculture Areas Programme (IAAP) in 1965.

Its advocates argued that the new technology was 'scale neutral' and could be used with as much benefit by small as well as big landowners. However, in the actual implementation, small holdings were not found to be viable units for technological change. Joan Mencher observed that the concerned agriculture officers were far from neutral. 'What they thought was needed to further the green revolution was to forget about small farmers ... because they could not really contribute to increased production. To these officials, progressive farmers are those who have viable farms and who are fairly well-off' (Mencher 1978: 239-40). Interestingly, though, a study from Punjab showed that not only were the smaller landowners as eager to adopt the new technology but that their per acre income from land was slightly higher than that of the bigger farmers (Bhalla and Chadha 1983: 78).

But, participating in the green revolution did not mean the same thing to smaller farmers as it did to bigger farmers. While bigger farmers had enough surplus of their own to invest in the new capital-intensive farming, for smaller landowners it meant additional dependence on borrowing, generally from informal sources. My study of three villages in a green revolution district of Haryana showed that their average outstanding debt from informal sources was the highest even in absolute terms when compared with other categories of farmers (Jodhka 1995c: A124). Although theoretically the new technology was 'scale neutral', it was certainly not 'resource neutral' (Harriss 1987: 231). The new technology also compelled widespread involvement with the market. Unlike traditional agriculture, cultivators in post-green revolution agriculture had to buy all farm inputs from the market for which they often had to take credit from traders or institutional sources. In order to clear the debts, they had no choice but to sell the farm yield in the market even when they needed to keep it for their own consumption. They sold their farm yield immediately after harvesting when prices were relatively low, and bought later in the year for consumption when prices were higher. Thus although the small farmers took to the new technologies, the fact that their resources were limited meant that these technologies ushered in a new set of dependencies. On the other hand, it has definitely strengthened the economic and political position of rich farmers.

One of the manifestations of the growing market orientation of agrarian production was the emergence of a totally new kind of mobilization of surplus-producing farmers who demanded a better deal for the agricultural sector. Interestingly, these 'new' farmers' movements emerged almost simultaneously in virtually all the green revolution regions. Though initiated in the late 1970s, these movements gained momentum during the decade of the 1980s. Using the language of neo-populism (Dhanagare 1991; Brass 1994) and in some cases also invoking traditional social networks and identities of the landowning dominant castes (Gupta 1997), its leaders argued that India was experiencing a growing division between the city and the village. And the village, i.e. the agrarian sector, was being exploited by the city or the industrial sector through the mechanism of 'unequal exchange'.

Those who led these movements were mostly substantial landowners who had benefited most from the developmental programmes and belonged to the numerically large middle-level caste groups, whom Srinivas had called the 'dominant castes' (Srinivas 1994). The members of this new 'social class' not only emerged as a dominant group at village level but they also came to dominate regional/state-level politics in most parts of India. They had an accumulated surplus that they sought to invest in ever more profitable enterprises. Some of them diversified into other economic activities (Rutten 1991) or migrated to urban areas (Upadhy 1988) or entered agricultural trade (Harriss-White 1996). Culturally also, this new class differed significantly from both the classical peasants and the old landlords. As an observer comments:

A typical family of this class has a landholding in its native village, cultivated by hired labour, *bataidar*, tenant or farm servants and supervised by the father or one son; business of various descriptions in town managed by other sons; and perhaps a young and bright child who is a doctor or engineer or a professor. It is this class that is most vocal about injustice done to the village (Balagopal 1987: 1545).

The changes produced by the green revolution also generated an interesting debate among Marxist scholars on the question of defining the prevailing 'mode of production' in Indian agriculture. Though the debate raised a large number of questions, the most contentious revolved around whether capitalism had become dominant in Indian agriculture or was still characterized by the semi-feudal mode of production. A good number of scholars, with some variation in

their formulations, argued that the capitalist tendency had started in India with the disintegration of the old system during colonial rule, and that after Independence the process of accumulation had gathered momentum (Patnaik 1990; Thorner 1982). Another set of scholars, on the basis of their own empirical studies mostly from eastern India, asserted that Indian agriculture was still dominated by a semi-feudal mode of production. This position was best articulated by Bhaduri (1984). He argued that landlords-cum-moneylenders continued to dominate the process of agricultural production. Peasants and labourers were tied to them through the mechanism of debt that led to 'forced commercialization' of labour and agricultural yield. This produced a self-perpetuating stagnant and exploitative agrarian structure that could be at best described as 'semi-feudal'. The internal logic of this system worked against any possibility of agricultural growth or the development of capitalism in Indian agriculture (Bhaduri 1984).

However, towards the end of the debate there seems to have emerged a consensus that though it may have its local specificities and considerable regional variations, the capitalist mode of production indeed was on its way to dominating the agrarian economy of India and most certainly that of the regions which had experienced the green revolution (Thorner 1982).

Agrarian Changes and Agricultural Labour

Did the benefits of the green revolution 'trickle down' to agricultural labourers? How did it affect them relationally? These have been among the most debated questions in the literature on agrarian change in India.

In a study comparing wage rates of a pre-green revolution year with those of a year after the new technology had been adopted, Bardhan (1970) showed that while cash wages of agricultural labourers had gone up after the introduction of the new technology, their purchasing power had in fact come down due to overall increase in prices. Though not everyone would agree with Bardhan, few would dispute that though the green revolution brought an overall prosperity to the countryside, it also multiplied income inequalities both within the village and among different regions of the country (Bagchi 1982; Dhanagare 1988). In a way, it was in recognition of the failures of the 'trickle-down' thesis that 'target-group' oriented programmes for poverty alleviation were started during the second half of the 1970s.

During the decade of the 1970s, the proportion of agricultural labour to total population dependent on land also experienced a significant increase. According to one estimate it went up from 16.7 per cent in 1961 to 26.3 per cent in 1971 (Prasad 1994: 15). However, micro-level studies have shown that the increase was not an effect of land sales by marginal landholders. A substantial proportion of the new labourers were tenants evicted from land after the land reforms or they were those who did not own land but were previously self-employed in traditional occupations (Bhalla 1976). The green revolution made many of the traditional occupations redundant and the 'jajmani relations' disintegrated rapidly (Aggarwal 1971; Karanth 1987).

It is generally believed that the process of agricultural modernization is accompanied by a change in the social relations of production, leading to freeing of agricultural labour from relations of patronage and institutionalized dependencies. Some scholars did report in their studies that such a process was under way in the Indian countryside, particularly in the regions where the green revolution had been a success. Breman (1974), for example, observed a process of 'depatronization' being experienced in the farmer-labourer relationship in the villages of south Gujarat. In a later study, he again argued that the inter-generational bondage characterized by extra-economic coercion no longer existed in south Gujarat and that the existing system of attached labour was no longer an unfree relation (Breman 1985). In his study of a Tanjore

village in Tamil Nadu, Bêteille (1971) had also observed a process of formalization in the relation of landowning castes with village artisans and landless labourers. They had 'acquired a more or less contractual character' (Bêteille 1971). On the basis of her study in the same region, Gough too reported that the old type of attached labour that was mainly paid in kind was being replaced by casual day labour, paid largely in cash (Gough 1989:142). Similarly, despite the elements of continuity that she observed, Bhalla reported that in the Haryana countryside relations between farmers and attached labourers were also changing into formalized contractual arrangements (Bhalla 1976).

Highlighting the elements of continuity reported by Bhalla in her study, Bhaduri (1984) argued that the presence of attached labourers and their high indebtedness meant that the relations of production even in the green revolution belt of Haryana were 'semi-feudal'. However, Bardhan (1984) and Rudra (1990) strongly contested the argument that the prevalence of attached labour necessarily meant 'semi-feudal' relations. Bardhan argued that the post-green revolution voluntaristic attached labour was very different from the feudal institution of bonded labour marked by hereditary and long-term indebtedness, entailing continuous and exclusive work for the creditor-employer. On the basis of his own work, he contended that the modernization of agricultural technology had in fact increased the demand for attached labourers, as they were seen to be useful in overseeing the work of casual labourers. Similarly, Rudra argued that the attached labour in the post-green revolution agrarian setting was more like permanent employment in the organized sector than an unfree relationship.

Arguing in a very different mode, Brass (1990) questioned the claims that offered a positive conceptualization of attached labour. Contesting the assumption that the voluntariness of attached labour meant freedom, Brass argued that 'while the recruitment may itself be voluntary, in the sense that labourer willingly offers himself for work, it does not follow that the production relation will be correspondingly free in terms of the worker's capacity to re-enter the labour market' (Brass 1990: 55). Brass argued that in post-green revolution Haryana, where he did a field study, farmers used the mechanism of debt and attachment to 'discipline' labour and 'decompose/recompose' the labour market, which led to 'deproletarianization' of labour. He asserted that the indebted labourers of the Haryana countryside were in fact 'bonded slaves'.

On the basis of my study (Jodhka 1994) in the same region, I have argued that while the attached labourers in Haryana were certainly not like permanent employees in the organized sector, as suggested by Rudra, and that elements of lack of freedom were obvious in their relationship with farmers, they could not be viewed as bonded slaves because of the overall change in the social framework of agricultural production in contemporary Haryana. I have suggested that attached labour in the post-green revolution agriculture should be seen more as 'a system of labour mortgage' where labourers, despite an acute dislike for the relationship, were compelled to accept attachment for interest-free credit. However, their loss of freedom being temporary in nature, they could not be characterized as bonded slaves. There were many cases where the labourers after having worked as attached labourers for some time, could leave the relationship. The growing integration of the village in the broader market and the increasing availability of alternative sources of employment outside agriculture, along with the changing political and ideological environment, had been leading to a process that weakened the hold of landowners over labourers. In some cases developmental schemes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) being run by the central government also helped.

More recently, scholars have been exploring new questions relating to the process of development and agrarian transition. Some of these could have far-reaching implications for

the classical theories of agrarian change. Such studies allow us to inquire into the specific effects of new agrarian technology on the changing position of women in the household and on the farm. Apart from pointing to the 'gender blindness' of much of the development theory and the empirical surveys on issues such as poverty and land rights of women in the region (Dube 1986; Agarwal 1988; 1994), students of gender and agrarian change have also shown how the new technology had a clear bias against women. It marginalized female agricultural wage labour both in terms of work as well as earnings (Chowdhry 1994). Similarly, the questions of ecology and displacement (Guha 1989; Das 1996; Kothari 1996) and the new social movements (Baviskar 1995) against the construction of big dams, once considered 'the temples of modern India', have raised serious critiques of the present models of development.

CONCLUSION

After his extensive tours of the Indian countryside during the early 1950s, Daniel Thorner (1956) suggested that one can conceptualize the Indian agrarian structure on the basis of the form of income derived from the soil, the type of right in the soil, and the form of actual field work that is done. Conceptualized in this way, the Indian agrarian structure can be thought to constitute three main social categories: *maliks* (the landlords or proprietors), *kisan* (the working peasants), and *mazdoors* (the labourers). Although speaking from a different perspective, around this time Srinivas (1955) conceptualized the structure of social relations in the Mysore village in a framework of *pātrōn*-client relationships and vertical ties between landlord and tenant, between master and servant, and between creditor and debtor. He also mentioned that these relations did not always correspond with the structure of caste hierarchies.

Another set of formulations of the prevailing agrarian structure in India before it embarked upon the path of 'development' came from different groups of Marxist scholars. As mentioned earlier, Bhaduri (1984) saw agrarian relations in eastern India as a classical case of a 'semi-feudal' mode of production where the landlord virtually controlled everything through his monopoly over land and credit. Similarly, Bhardwaj (1974) argued that agrarian relations in the Indian countryside were structured around a network of unequal exchange relations between those who possessed land, labour, and credit. However, these exchange relations were not among individuals with free will but were 'interlocked' with each other in such a manner that the prevailing structure worked in favour of the 'strong' and against the 'weak'.

Common to all these formulations was a stress on the fact that a small section of big landowners dominated a large section of agricultural producers through control over resources and ideologies. They were the people who rarely did any physical labour themselves. As Bêteille (1980) points out, there was, in fact, an inverse relationship between the extent of manual work performed and the degree of control over land.

Despite a considerable degree of continuity and significant regional variations, these relations have definitely experienced many changes over approximately the last fifty years. Independence from colonial rule and the launching of development programmes started a new phase in the history of Indian agriculture. At a purely quantitative level, the limited institutional changes—i.e. partial implementations of land reforms, adoption of new technology, and state support to the cultivators—have led to considerable expansion in the area under cultivation and the total volume of production.

A substantial volume of the literature shows that the agrarian structure has transformed the direction of a capitalist mode of organization at least in areas that experienced the green

revolution, which have extended from traditional crops such as wheat and paddy to new crops such as oil seeds and soya bean. The Indian farmer has increasingly become outward looking, orienting his needs to demands of the market rather than local conventions and earlier traditions, yet the impact of the change on the different categories defined by caste and gender has been a differential one. This is why the changes in agriculture have not secured a better quality of life for all social categories in the agrarian structure of village communities.

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~~Reading 76.23~~

NARAYANI GUPTA

READING - 16

URBAN STUDIES

Among the many things for which Patrick Geddes, the first professor of sociology in India, will be remembered is his contribution to the development of urban studies in India. His conversations and writings, above all his admiration for Indian towns, kindled an interest in Indian urban forms among administrators and scholars, ranging from Sanskritists to geographers (Gupta 1988). The Madras Geographical Association from the 1920s, and the Department of Geography at Varanasi in the 1950s, directed research towards the study of individual towns and urbanization (Ramachandran 1988). From the mid-1950s, as part of the massive exercise of building up a database for planners, there was an increase in studies of towns—by economists, demographers, and sociologists (Bose 1973). Urban history, which had academic but little practical value, saw a pioneering venture in 1968 (Gillion) but became a popular subject for research only from the late 1970s. Today the volume of work on urban history is beginning to catch up with that on urban 'problems'. Urban histories have a salutary effect in that they soften the sharpness of the 'traditional'/'modern' binary used by many social scientists. 'Modern' itself means three very different things—a set of values, a revolution in technology, a point in chronology. Similarly, 'traditional' means many different things, but most scholars assume a singular meaning as well as the unchanging character of 'tradition'.

Urban History

Typologies

Urban historians in India have to be wary of two dangers—first, the tendency to follow the periodization into 'ancient', 'medieval', and 'modern' used for much of European history (Thapar 1966). The insidious fusing of these terms with, respectively, 'Hindu', 'Islamic', and 'British' can prompt generalizations which may not be justified. The other danger is that many European or American texts on the city may be treated as canonical—but, to mention some of the best known examples, Fustel de Coulanges' *Ancient City* was only about the Greeks, Henri Pirenne's 'medieval towns' are those of western Europe, and 'modern towns' usually refer only to North America. Some stereotypes are being abandoned—it is now agreed that 'Islamic urbanism' is an over-simplified category (Brown 1986), and also that there is no family resemblance between the 'colonial towns' of North America and those of South Asia.

Sources

While there is a wide range of material—documents, oral evidence, the built environment—available for the study of urban centres in the last two centuries in India, there is very little for the earlier times. It would be unfair to expect to find the kind of information that one can easily find for contemporary European towns or medieval Indian towns; for example, information about wages, property transfers, or street alignments. It is also important to appreciate that different scholars look for different things in the same town—Sharar's (1975) Lucknow is suffused with *nazakat* (refinement) and nostalgia; for Hasan (1997) it is a town marked by violence; for Llewellyn-Jones (1985) it was an architectural free-for-all; while Oldenburg (1984) directs our attention to the heavy 'ordering' hand of the British after 1858.

Urban and Rural

The predominantly rural and agricultural character of India often makes one forget its five millennia of urbanism. 'There is a view current in some circles of sociologists that the distinction between rural and urban sociology is not meaningful in the Indian context because about 80 per cent of the people live in villages' (Rao 1991). In Europe, economic changes in the last 150 years led to a major revolution. As a result, today an overwhelming proportion of the population lives in urban areas. Such a revolution has not occurred in India, though the relative proportion of town dwellers has been increasing since the 1930s. Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi figure among the largest cities of the world, but their size is explained, like that of many others, as a result of 'urbanization without industrialization'.

Urban Patterns

The pattern of urban settlements—the spacing of cities, medium-sized towns, and small towns ('size' being used to mean that of population, not spatial extent) varies from region to region. The northern plain and eastern India are characterized by a few very large cities, and many small towns and *qasbas* (market towns). Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have a large number of fairly evenly spaced medium towns; this is also true of late-twentieth-century Punjab and Haryana. Kerala has an unusual landscape of almost continuous urbanism. Andhra and Orissa are markedly under-urbanized. These features are of long vintage—186 of the 216 towns with populations of over one lakh (1981 Census) are historic ones, that is, they are over 200 years old. From the 1950s, there have been official surveys which have repeatedly suggested how urban centres should be spread more evenly across the country, but these suggestions have not met with much success (National Commission on Urbanization 1988).

Classification

Census enumerators and demographers define and grade towns on the basis of population. By the geographers' definition, towns are multifunctional—that is, inhabited by people performing functions that are not primary (agricultural) functions but secondary (industrial) and tertiary (service). In India, Sanskrit and Persian, as well as the vernaculars, have had terms to distinguish different kinds of towns (*rajdhani*, capital; *pattana*, commercial city; *nagara*, town; *shahar*, town; *bandar*, port; *qala*, fort; *qasba*, market town; etc.). Towns can be classified according to their original or chief function—capitals, forts, ports, university towns, temple towns, and hill stations. With the passage of time, the dominant function often changes. Agra began as a capital, but continued as a major commercial *entrepôt*.

Trade, regional and long distance, has been a rationale for towns since early times. The 'rise' and 'fall' of regimes did not necessarily promote or paralyse trade. In the third and second millennia BC, urban settlements along the Indus linked Afghanistan to Sumer (Ratnagar 1981). When oceanic trade decreased with the decline of Sumer, other transcontinental routes developed, as indicated by sites in the Indus-Ganga interfluvium. In the thousand years when Buddhism was dominant (third century BC to eighth century AD), its expansion, marked by monasteries and universities, was linked with that of trade (Ray 1994). As a result, an urban map was spread over much of the subcontinent and central Asia, the towns of which continued to be linked by trade long after Buddhism declined in India. From the ninth century onwards, these ties were reinforced by Islam, when armies, Sufi preachers, and caravans of merchants moved between towns in west and central Asia and India. Guilds of artisans, craftsmen, and traders—strongly bonded families of Marwaris, Chettiars, Bohras, and Parsis—established bases in ports and inland towns (Chattopadhyaya 1994; Champakalakshmi 1996; Ramaswami 1985). In the eighteenth century, the inroads made by some European trading companies led to a decline in the populations of some towns (described as 'deurbanization'); Surat and Masulipatnam lost merchants to Bombay and Madras (Das Gupta 1979; Subrahmanyam 1993). When the British took over Indian states, towns like Thanjavur, Dhaka, and Murshidabad lost their courts and, therefore, some of their artisans and court gentry. Later, improved highways and the new railway network created new centres and revived older ones (Bayly 1983). From the end of the nineteenth century, with the installation of mechanized factory industries, some towns became much more heavily populated.

Political Power, Culture, Defence

Monumental architecture led to some towns being labelled 'ritual-regal' or 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' (Weber 1966), as 'temple towns' (Geddes 1919) or forts. Most of them were richly multifunctional, and those that became quite deserted were those which were unifunctional, and not on a trade route, like Fatehpur Sikri and Vijayanagara. There were others like Tamralipti, which succumbed to the forces of nature. Most sites were reused, though at any point of time the actual area under occupation might have been at some distance from older ones. The extant town is no guide to its antiquity, which is gleaned from literary records.

Morphology

Town Size

No schematic model of 'the Indian town' can be prepared, since the size and morphology of each would vary not only with geography but also with the requirements of security, the volume of trade, and the investment by individuals or the sovereign. From the early centuries AD until the eighteenth century there have been redactions of *Vastu shastra* (treatises on the layout of towns and buildings) which must be understood as guide-lines, and not blueprints. Jaipur, established early in the eighteenth century, is often cited as an example of a town built according to *Vastushastra*. What is more plausible, however, is that Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, who was an astronomer, and Raja Jai Singh, an astrophile, designed a town based on astronomical calculations (Nilsson 1987).

A rough periodization for Indian towns can be threefold—before the railways, from the 1860s to the 1930s, and from the 1930s onwards, when cars came into use. Pre-railway towns varied in size from 200 to 500 ha, with populations ranging from 1,00,000 to 4,00,000. In the second phase, industries and adventurous migration increased urban density, and there was ribbon development leading out of towns alongside the railway tracks. Once cars came into use, those who could afford them were able to move out of the crowded towns, skirt the jerry-built extensions to shift to well-ordered suburbs. Despite the superficial similarity between present-day Indian cities and American ones (an inner city surrounded by lower-middle-class housing in turn enclosed by upper-class suburbs), it would be inappropriate to apply in India the ecology model of the Chicago sociologists (Park et al. 1925). Gideon Sjoberg had pointed this out in a disarming fashion as early as 1955: 'Anthropologists and sociologists ... must ... recognise that the particular kind of social structure found in cities in the United States is not typical of all societies.' American towns, all less than 300 years old, have no links with older settlements or with villages. Elsewhere, in West and Central Asia, where 'urban'/'sedentary' is the opposite pole to 'nomadic', towns are federations of tribal groupings, not comparable with Indian towns. Indian urban morphology can most usefully be compared to that of European towns, which have long histories and have in many cases grown out of villages or market towns. Most Indian towns were built on slopes or along river banks, important in the centuries of pitched battles and before piped water. City walls were made for security, and were to delineate tax boundaries. Citadels separated from the town by another wall were called *petta-kottai* (town fort) in Tamil.

Neighbourhoods

Mohalla, *para*, and *pol* were the Urdu/Hindi, Bengali, and Gujrati terms for neighbourhoods. Each had usually a single entrance-point, guarded by a gate, and with privacy ensured by culs-de-sac (Doshi 1974; Krafft 1993). Each was inhabited by families linked by kinship, *jati* (sub-caste), or occupation. Their location in relation to the citadel or place of worship was decided by convenience. Relative location did not indicate status (it was often assumed—wrongly—that those of highest social ranks were nearest the citadel). There were no areas specifically cordoned off for any ethnic/religious group, as in European ghettos. Contemporary maps of the seventeenth or eighteenth century do not indicate any communitarian divisions of urban territory, other than that, not surprisingly, Brahmins were found living near *mandirs* (temples) and *maulvis* near *masjids* (mosques). Beyond the wall lay gardens, orchards, country houses, shrines, graveyards, and *sarais* (rest houses). Soldiers' makeshift camps were usually outside the wall, as were the quarters of weavers or leather workers, who needed running water from rivers or streams. In contrast to the densely built towns of the north, in south India, where the climate was not one of extremes, towns were often open and not walled. Open towns have often been labelled 'Hindu' and densely built ones 'Islamic' because the former appeared to approximate Vastushastra norms and the latter the towns of West Asia. In fact, it was climate rather than religion that decided morphology. Varanasi is similar to 'Islamic' Agra or Shahjahanabad-Delhi, though its profusion of temples and its history made it a 'Hindu' town (Eck 1983). The terms are therefore as inappropriate as it would be to term Paris a 'Christian' city.

From the nineteenth century onwards, as the tight control over the entry and exit of people in towns decreased, and the urban population kept increasing, town walls ceased to be boundaries—the famine-ravaged, the landless, the sharp-witted seeking a fortune, settled either on the periphery or within the towns which seemed to have an elastic quality of being able to accommodate people. The most spectacular example of the town as refuge was the absorption of floods of refugees in Delhi, Lahore, Calcutta, and Karachi during the crisis of Partition in 1947. Increasing density led to degradation of the housing stock, and thus to inner areas becoming the territories of the poor. In earlier days, in such a situation a new quarter would have been laid out, or the old settlement abandoned for a new one adjacent to it (as in medieval Europe). But from the nineteenth century, cartography and the registering of property rights conspired to make towns and villages fixed in space, with definite boundaries. As a result of colonial rule new morphological patterns arose.

Indo-European Towns

In the 1960s and 1970s scholars commonly used the terms 'the colonial town' and 'the colonial port-town' to categorize the Indian urban environment. On examination one finds that there were many 'Indian' elements in the morphology of these ports. The seventeenth-century European coastal settlements began as sturdy forts designed by European engineers. Later, extramural areas were laid out where Indian merchants and weavers could build their houses, as provided by the Peshwas in contemporary Pune. These were often based on the grid pattern. So were the military cantonments later attached to towns annexed by the British, and the 'city extensions' built in the twentieth century (Goodfriend 1989). Extravagant with space, the British lived in spacious garden houses which resembled not homes in Britain but the *havelis* (town houses) of the Indian rich. Many Indians bought land in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, and built houses in the wall-to-wall style of the Indian town. Some, however, opted for the garden-house or bungalow favoured by the British. There were many open areas in the British Indian towns which could not be policed effectively, as also vacant stretches on the properties of rich Indians. Here the poorer immigrants settled, either as tenants or as squatters. They built mud-and-thatch clusters—towns-within-towns called *bustees* (small towns) in Calcutta and *cheris* (non-Brahmin neighbourhoods) in Madras. Growing by accretion, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras became extensive mosaics comprising villages, *agraharanis* (originally land given in gift to Brahmins, later connoting Brahmin neighbourhoods near temples), housing estates, garden houses, and dense *mohallas*—clusters (Bose 1968; Kosambi 1980; Neild 1979). These urban conglomerations were spread over a much larger area than older Indian towns.

Real Estate and Town Planning

Colonial governance affected urban morphology in two ways. First, it made the ownership of urban land permanent and transferable. Hitherto, the only way to do this had been to convert property into *waqf* property/land made into a dedicated trust because it was supported by an institution of learning or a place of worship (Malik 1993). Real estate became for the first time a field for investment. This coincided with the trend towards nuclear families, and also with the internationalization of the 'colonial' assumption that one's status was measurable by the size of one's property (King 1976). This explains the new preference by the upper middle class for spacious houses on the outskirts of towns, earlier character-

ing Housing) it was accepted by the citizens as natural! Second, British India was given planning ideology, shaped on the lines of the British Town and Country Planning Act of 1909 and the New York Ordinance of 1916 on 'zoning'—the first advocated anticipating and managing the expansion of towns, the second dividing up towns on the basis of land use, so that an 'industrial zone' would be distinct from an 'institutional' or 'residential' one—totally at variance with the form of Indian towns. The two principles—of demarcating proprietary zones and of zoning—have become the anchors of urban development in India after Independence. What was sought in principle, however, needs to be distinguished from what actually takes place. During colonial rule and to a much greater degree thereafter, the 'best-laid plans' were subverted by squatters. Formal and informal job opportunities act as magnets, and collusion between political operators, officials, and migrants has led to 'colonisation from below' occurring simultaneously with that from above (Bijlani 1986).

Slums

The term 'slum' came into common use in twentieth-century India, and a vast literature has built up around it. One-fifth of the total urban population in 1985 was estimated to be living in slums. Defined by the density of habitation, with implications of poverty, degraded housing stock, and demoralization sliding into crime, this term is used in India without reference to history. It includes historic urban areas, well-organized communities, shanty-towns, and run-down multi-storeyed buildings like Bombay's *chauls* originally used for makeshift homes, later for high-density flats built to house factory workers. This amalgamation of such diverse categories is inimical to any serious proposals for 'urban renewal' that aim to improve the quality of life in over-used areas. Officials find it simpler to resort to expedients like removing or relocating people living in 'slums' (Ali 1995).

Public Areas

In towns, public and private areas coexisted without being rigidly demarcated. 'Public' areas included thoroughfares, gardens, riverbanks, places of worship, and shopping arcades which as in medieval Europe, often shaded off into one another. On the other hand, citadels and palaces had gradations from public to private, demarcated by buildings and their nomenclature. In this layout, there were many cases of imitation by one ruler of palaces they had seen (as the Raja of Amber of Agra) or heard of (Shahjahan of Isfahan) or of practices they had observed (the Marathas of the Mughal court). In Europe there was a striking increase in the seventeenth century in the number of public buildings—town halls, courts, secretariats, museums, and libraries. This occurred in India in the nineteenth century as part of the ideology of the Raj (Metcalf 1989). British New Delhi, a whole city built after 1914 on a baroque plan completely at variance with Indian urban morphology (Irving 1981), later became a model for other capitals (new Patna, Chandigarh, and Bhubaneswar (Kalia 1988, 1994)). Most studies of the built form in India focus on style, patronage, and the political use of architecture (Koch 1991; Meister and Dhaky 1997). From the 1950s there has been a self-conscious quest by many architects for an 'Indian' style (Correa 1985). Few scholars have analysed how town dwellers used buildings or reacted to them—monumental architecture can awaken awe and admiration. Because secular public architecture is relatively new in India, and is associated with government, it often engenders a sense of alienation as town dwellers do not have a sense of pride or of affinity with it (Evenson 1989).

Bazaars—neighbourhood, supralocal, periodic—~~are~~ invariably convivial and animated. Twentieth-century 'planning' seeks to bring order—and monotony—into these by regulating sizes and layout. Modern marketing techniques, which shout to be heard, are fast making shops and their commodities more and more visible, so that window-shopping has become a major leisure activity. Taking advantage of this clientele are those who colonize pedestrian areas by setting out 'pavement shops'; these mark the intrusion of the 'bazaar' into formal shopping precincts. Similarly, streets and *galis* (lanes) have for so long been treated as areas of social interaction and business transactions that it is an uphill task to instil a perception of them as traffic corridors. This problem was faced by European towns in the nineteenth century and is very common in Asian and African towns today.

Mental Maps

Town-dwellers were familiar with as much of the town as was relevant to their lives. Towns for which vernacular maps are known to have been made (painted, and later printed) are those like Varanasi or Mathura, both of which have a concentration of temples and have therefore been tourist destinations for centuries. Where temple *rath-yatras* (car processions) have more than local significance (like Puri or Madurai) or where the town has a 'sacred geography' (as in Bhaktapur in Nepal or in Ramnagar near Varanasi), the community's sense of the town is more comprehensive (Singh 1953; Gutschow 1993).

Gender in Public Areas

Public areas were largely male territories. Women, jealously guarded, could not venture out except under escort. The degree of protection was proportionate to social status. Until the twentieth century most women did not know much about the town beyond their mohalla, and even today there are many who know far less about the town they live in than about the town where they spent their childhood. In Kolkata for example, even shopping for the household is still the prerogative of men. Elsewhere it is taken care of by the itinerant salesmen who come to the door. In the late nineteenth century Indian women were dismayed when piped water was introduced; this put an end to their only regular out-of-doors activity—the daily walk to the river (the same innovation was resented by African women because it spelt the end of their gossip sessions at the well). Places of worship were areas it was legitimate to frequent, and temples always exuded an air of animation as much as devotion. Other than visiting these, townswomen could not enjoy the role of flâneur.

The Threshold

Between the public and private territories is the wide threshold of the semi-public. Avenues branch off into *galis* and these into *kuchas* (dead-end lanes), a hierarchy marked by narrowing width and length. The *deorhilroak*—a raised covered verandah at plinth level marked the area of transition between home and gali. Courtyards, balconies, and roofs also were semi-public areas. In the pre-automobile centuries, social interaction was chiefly in these areas and within a comfortable walking distance from home.

Private Territories

Homes underwent a qualitative change from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Earlier, personal incomes could not be gauged from people's homes, since they preferred to amass wealth

wealth in the form of 'portable property'. Many rich merchants lived in disproportionately small houses, often built against or above shops or business premises. There were optimists who built spacious havelis that could accommodate attendants and client craftsmen (Prasad 1998). The poor put together mud-and-thatch houses reminiscent of their village homes (Payne 1977). All homes, big or small, were formally organized so as to ensure privacy, with the *mardana* (men's area) separate from the *zenana* (women's area). In the former, most rooms were multifunctional (Duleau 1993; Pramar 1989) and, in keeping with the climate, furnishings were sparse. With a life lived as much 'without' as 'within', the Indian male would not have called his home his castle. For women, the kitchen had a central position, because of the time perforce spent in it and because it was a sphere where they exercised control (Minault 1986). The only women who enjoyed control over the whole establishment were the unorthodox ones—the women whose artistic abilities, wit, and social poise won them grants of property, at the price of being labelled 'nautch-girls' (Lall 1996).

From the nineteenth century, the homes of the well-off in the big towns underwent a change. If the British had gentrified the Bengal hut into the bungalow (King 1984), the rich Indian began to copy elements of British homes in terms of architecture and decor, particularly in rooms where European visitors might be entertained. From early on in the twentieth century, engineers and the controllers of the cement industry began to propagate the concept of 'ideal homes'. Later, 'interior designers' joined them in selling the idea of spacious homes and gardens. Homes also changed because of transformations in the structure and authority of the family. As women got more freedom to control their own time and activities, as well as their homes, the distinction between *zenana* and *mardana* disappeared, the kitchen was filled with icons of modern gadgetry rather than objects of ritual worship, the courtyard was appreciated as being trendily 'traditional' rather than as an integral element of lifestyle. From the 1950s, the first generation of Indian architects (as distinct from engineers) began to design homes. The novelty of having a house led to rampant individualism, which became the butt of sarcasm for younger architects (Bhatia 1994). As glossy magazines and television advertisements projected desirable lifestyles, the differences between regions in the subcontinent became blurred.

Civic Governance

Civic amenities also shape lifestyle. As with many institutional changes, the introduction of municipal government in British India after 1861 was seen by many later scholars as something quite novel. Gillion's remarks made in 1968 are representative:

The traditional cities of India ... are viewed in the light of Weberian and Marxist analysis. They are contrasted with the selfgoverning towns of medieval Europe ... [and] appear to be disunited, often ephemeral conglomerations of subjects, dependent on the court, and prevented from free association by caste rivalries.

Going on to analyse Ahmedabad, he expresses surprise. 'Here was a city with a corporate tradition and spirit ... and a history of indigenous financial and industrial activity' (Gillion 1968)—Ahmedabad was not, as he thought, a unique case. Densely populated settlements need regulation to ensure civic harmony and to provide facilities like water, food supplies, and sewerage. The municipalities of the nineteenth century were not a new form of governance—they merely replaced the older *kotwalis* and *panchayats*. With the enlargement of urban settlements after Independence, planning of facilities came to be done at macro level. The volume of reports and studies on these from the 1950s is vast. But it has taken time for the

suggestions made in these to be translated into action. Planners and citizens have begun to appreciate that equity demands that urban services be available to all, irrespective of income; that urban facilities should not be subsidized at the expense of rural; that a very high degree of efficiency in maintenance is needed, because of the wear-and-tear of high-density living (Mehra 1991) as well as the hazard of epidemic. Civic sense has to be inculcated since a large proportion of town dwellers are first-generation urbanites, more concerned to fight for their individual rights than to think of a larger, more amorphous 'community'.

Hinterlands

Indian towns have always been cosmopolitan. Since urban consumerism is buoyed by income from land revenue, historians often refer to medieval Indian towns as 'parasitic', a phrase coined by Hoselitz (Habib 1963). This is however to ignore their role as employment generators. Guilds of artisans and builders used to travel over long distances to find employment in towns. Merchants, scholars, and preachers travelled from town to town. The phenomenon of rural people as first-generation urbanites is relatively recent—it is the consequence of agrarian distress, famine, perceived job opportunities in towns, and the sense of the town as a stepping stone to outward mobility. Migration to towns has been in the first instance overwhelmingly male, later followed by families. In Kolkata at any time, only 47 per cent of the population had been born in the city (Raza and Habeeb 1976). Towns' hinterlands could be defined variously. In the pre-railway period it was the area with which a town had mutual dependence. Both before and after the railways were built, one could map the area from which its colleges drew students. After mechanized industries were set up, a 'hinterland' could indicate the regions which provided factory labour. The freemasonry of the poor ensured that no migrant was left to fend for himself and it was assumed that one's extended kin or jati group would also help one (Banarasidas 1983). Even today, given a choice, newcomers would prefer to live near people of their own language group or 'home town' or village. Their links with the latter, ritualized through annual visits or during the harvest or festive season, gives sustenance, but also dilutes the degree of attachment to the city. Cosmopolitanism is thus an outer veneer on a core of a strong regional identity, which becomes less marked with the second-generation urban dweller.

The Freedom of the City

'City air makes free' was true for India, not in a legal sense as in medieval Europe, but in a more general manner. Towns could provide opportunities and a break with the past. This has been seen over the last hundred years. Immigrants do not have to apprehend the terror of anonymity which haunts Western towns because they are cushioned by jati and kinship support. What can generate a sense of alienation is not social exclusiveness, but the inadequacy of civic services, and their mismatch with the glossy advertisements of urban lifestyle. Ascriptive status, as understood until the mid-twentieth century, divided urban dwellers on the basis of the manner of speech, apparel, and social mores. Today, the marker of class divisions is income—proclaimed by life and location of home.

Shared Goods and Services

A way in which some countries try to reduce class distinctions and create a sense of citizenship is to invest the public/shared areas with dignity and accessibility. Increased densities have meant that older shared spaces have been whittled away. This makes it imperative that public areas be maintained well.

become important as never before. Structured spaces have been paralleled by structured time, with regimented work patterns and major traffic movements at specific times of the day—which calls for long-term transportation and traffic policies.

P. 10

Community

Communication

If towns are cosmopolitan, they need a language for communication. Travellers' accounts refer to the many languages heard in Indian towns; *dubashes* (interpreters) were much in demand. There existed numerous hybrid languages like Urdu—the lingua franca of soldiers—developed in Hyderabad and Delhi and Bombaiya Hindi—the link language of Mumbai. The multi-language derivatives of words in many Indian languages tell of the common urban marketplace. At the same time linguists tell us that class differences can be distinguished by the way people employ different registers in the same language.

Patronage

One of the major roles of urban centres was to act as patrons (Sundar 1995). Rulers, aristocrats, and rich merchants patronized poets, artists and architects, and employed craftspeople. Specific towns came to be identified with particular artistic and literary forms—Maratha Tanjore with Carnatic music, Nawabi Lucknow with Kathak dance, Shahjahan's Delhi with Mughal architecture, the Nizam's Hyderabad with Urdu poetry. Literature and art cut across communitarian divisions and language barriers, reinforcing cosmopolitanism. Urban elites in some cases reinforced jati/sect differences, in others cut across them. Delhi was no more an 'Islamic city' in its culture than it was in its morphology (though it *was* one in the architectural dominance of the Jama Masjid), just as Vijayanagara was more than a 'Hindu city' in its architectural features. The ambit of urban patronage has widened in the last fifty years because of state participation and because of the provision of infrastructure—halls and auditoria. Music and dance earlier contained in courts and temples now have much larger audiences.

Urban Tension

Different urban groups did not always coexist cordially. Though there is no evidence of the kind of street riots that used to occur in medieval Iran, there were instances documented from the eighteenth century of conflict over the use of public areas, particularly the street. 'Left-hand' castes tried to keep out those of the 'Right-hand' in Madras (Roche 1975) and upper-caste Christians challenged the *pariahs* in Pondicherry (Weber 1978)—in both, it would appear that those who protested were taking advantage of the ignorance of the Europeans. Rival groups of Brahmins fought to control a temple in Madras (Appadurai 1981), Shias and Sunnis clashed during Mohurram in Lucknow and Mumbai (Hasan 1997; Masselos 1976) and established Hindu merchants tried to cut out the newcomer Jains (Gupta 1981). The quarrels were ostensibly over symbols and perceived violations of status/hierarchy. Two generalizations can be made about these episodes which the British called 'riots'—first, as towns became more crowded, codes of conduct earlier honoured were no longer adhered to; boundaries and thresholds were no longer held as sacred. As immigrants moved into towns in an unregulated fashion, a proto-proletariat was being created (McGee 1977), that could be recruited for demonstrations. Crowds are extraordinarily easy to mobilize in the densely inhabited parts of the towns, where the police would find it difficult to check them (Naidu 1990). Second, public discussion, newspapers, and pamphlets made individuals conscious of an affinity with their

own kin and jati groups, or developed loyalties to particular political leaders (Bayly 1975). Linking towns into the chain of larger political associations made for common patterns of behaviour, even copycat riots.

Civic Protest

Towns as battlefield also took the form of protest by citizens against the government. A *bartal*—(literally) to lock one's premises/to down shutters—against a proposed house tax in Varanasi in 1811 (Cohn 1988) followed a time-honoured mode of protest, as did campaigns against merchants hoarding grain, or officials trying to put through a programme of vaccination or of inspecting houses during the plague epidemic in 1898. The high points of the nationalist movement were demonstrations of solidarity in towns (Kumar 1971) which became the models for 'protest marches' and slogan chanting, a marriage of Indian devotional processions and European political demonstrations. After Independence, capital cities were frequently the venue for anti-establishment displays. Delhi has been particularly vulnerable. Tikait's long week of colonizing Delhi's Rajpath in October 1988 and turning it into a rural landscape is a vivid memory (Gupta 1994). These short-term dislocations are different from the other displays of strength—even propagandists have incited pogroms and targeted particular groups for violent actions (Chakravarti and Haksar 1987), or have taken over territories with real-estate value (Patel and Thorner 1995). The establishment is also known to have exercised force, one of the most notorious incidents being the forcible eviction of residents from a 'slum' in Shahjahanabad (Bose and Dayal 1977). Indian towns have not witnessed pitched battles like the class struggles in Paris in 1789 and 1848, but incidents that show how communitarianism can brutalize people en masse are a warning of the frightening situation that can be generated when intolerance is expressed in conjunction with corruption and weak governance.

Images

Many-layered Towns

India has the added distinction of its towns living in several centuries simultaneously. As urban dwellers move from Redfield's 'little communities' to Karl Mannheim's 'mass society', western capitalist patterns of land use coexist with stubbornly persistent older patterns. Kinship groups dissolve into nuclear families. The same individuals patronize both temples and discotheques. Private opulence rises unabashed from a base of public squalor. The obsession with 'countenance' at personal level is matched by indifference to the outward appearance of the public. 'Viewing Indian cities, one might infer Indians to possess, not merely an indifference, but a deep-seated hatred for the physical world. Buildings are often abused in ways that suggest a pent-up rage that might otherwise be unleashed in a frenzy of social destruction' (Evenson 1989). Recently a psychologist predicted that random violence against women might increase, as an expression of frustration and alienation (Nandy 1996). But as against these features of modern urbanism, there is still a sense of the mohalla, poverty is not always synonymous with misery, and the immigrants' bewilderment does not necessarily lead to crippling loneliness or anomie. What is needed is to improve the quality of urban governance for the average town dweller and to generate a sense of the larger community, bigger than the mohalla, smaller than the region.

Urban Images

In most cultures, town and countryside are seen as opposite categories. The sense of a town being a better habitat than a village is not...

over material discomforts' (Marcus 1989). The European nostalgia for living in the countryside does not seem strong in India though many writers have described the beauty of the particular rural landscapes of their memory. In earlier days, towns were defined/celebrated in terms of human attributes—brave, strong, beautiful (Ramanujam 1970). Urdu poems in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mourned ravaged cities. Today, that sense of specificity and identity is blurred as towns look more like clones of each other—and even toponymy changes with political swings. But it is always possible to hope that, as has happened in other countries, Indian towns will regain their distinctive identities.

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Science

Claude Alvares

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I was born into a culture that continues to exercise greater influence and power over behaviour than modern science does, or will ever do. If that were properly understood, then this obituary would not appear either scandalous or scurrilous. Every culture enjoins on its members respect for certain entities. Modern science does not find a place in our pantheon.

Far from it. From this side of Suez, in fact, modern science appears akin to an imported brand of toothpaste. It contains elaborate promises and much sweetness and glamour. It can be used, is often used (many times pointlessly), yet can be dispensed with at any time precisely because it is still largely irrelevant to life.

Toothpaste has become a significant universal commodity: for some, it has even evolved into a category of mind. For decades now, it has remained (with the toothbrush) an essential adjunct of modern civilization, available from Managua to Manila. Those who have ingratiated themselves with modernity are prone to find any absence of toothpaste (either for themselves or for others) a source of acute anxiety.

In our society, however, the moment we find toothpaste unavailable, we return to neem sticks, or cashew or mango leaves, or mixtures composed of ginger, charcoal and salt. All excellent, locally available and dependable materials for keeping the mouth fresh and disinfected and the teeth clean.

Now modern science is a universal commodity too, also distinctly recognizable from Managua to Manila, also approved by many whose devotion to its tenets and its propagation is more often than not related to its ability to provide a high living wage and, often, in addition, power, prestige and a chauffeur-driven car. Like the early morning toothbrush, science is considered a precondition for a freshly minted worldview uncontaminated by unlearned or unemancipated perceptions. For its part, it offers to flush out the many disabling superstitions from all those hidden crevices of a society's soul, to eliminate any and every offending bacteria, to produce a clean and ordered world. Most important, it promises a materialist paradise for the world's unprivileged through its awesome, magical powers. But not for any reason difficult to understand, it also continues to require as big an advertising budget as toothpaste. There is something about modernity's leading prestige product that is actually so bland it has to be rendered spectacular by sensationalism and a fertile imagination.

Such an irreverent view of modern science will not be comfortable for those who have chosen to remain imprisoned within the dominant present-day perceptions of the age. But for us, it always was *another* culture's product, a recognizably foreign entity. We eventually came to see it as an epoch-specific, ethnic (Western) and culture-specific (culturally *entombed*) project, one that is politically directed.

distorting, and often attempting to take over, the larger, more stable canvas of human perceptions and experience. In a world consisting of dominating and dominated societies, some cultures are bound to be considered more equal than others. This heritage of inequality, inaugurated and cemented during colonialism, has remained still largely intact today. So the culture products of the West, including its science, are able to claim compelling primacy and universal validity only because of their (as we shall see later) congenital relationship with the political throne of global power.

Colonialism, we know, subjects, undermines, subordinates, and then replaces what it eliminates with its own exemplar. It is natural to expect that Western science, an associate of colonial power, would function not any less brazenly and effectively: extending its hegemony by intimidation, propaganda, catechism and political force. In fact, being a culture product, it was only to be expected that it would be associated with the various (mostly aggressive) thrusts of that culture. It would attempt to extend its hegemony to other cultures through an elite class, which social commentators today call 'modernizers', whose distinguishing characteristic, following a period of schooling at Oxbridge, was a thoroughgoing alienation from the life and culture of their own people. And true to its origins, this science has remained in the service of Western culture to this day, a crucial component in the hysterically active hegemony of the West.

However, due to stupendous and unrecognized inner strengths, the cultures on which modern science was sought to be imposed were able to prevent themselves from being fully incorporated. Its inability to deliver the goods and its general incompetence to deal with specific problems have also led to its decline. A global overview today of its actual hegemony would, in fact, be quite distressing to its devotees. In many areas of the non-Western world, it has been reduced to the status of a commodity (like toothpaste) or a gadget (to be purchased with money). Its promise to transform the world into a materialist paradise and thereby put an end to poverty and oppression has lost all credibility. There is evidence indeed to show that it has accomplished just the contrary. As for its offer of a new metaphysical worldview to provide us with ethical guidance, this has also been largely rejected. *Dharma*, conversation, community, interaction with sacred entities and their associated symbols, still remain prime movers within our societies. One even encounters significant desertions from the imperium of science in the very citadels of Western culture.

Thus, the geographical area of its influence has turned out to be far less than was originally desired or attempted. In comparison, other ideas have dominated (and sometimes unsettled) human societies for far longer periods of time. Buddhism, for example, which like Western science had its own theory of causation, was born on Indian soil, from where it was exported to entire civilizations. In societies like Japan, it exercised influence for centuries. It unsettled most South and South East Asian societies with its radically new notions of what a society should be like and of the relationship between the sangha and the state. In comparison with Buddhism, the sway of modern science is impressive, but less pervasive. We should also remember that Buddhism, in contrast to science, was not propagated and imposed by violence.

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The actual self-perception of modern science as a recognizably distinct human activity does not go back more than 200 years in Western society. The very term 'scientist' (used as an analogy to the word 'artist') was first suggested by William Whewell as late as 1833 at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. It was only used without distaste by its practitioners towards the end of the first quarter of this century.

This is not to deny that the world's citizenry did suffer greatly from the temptations of modern science. It did. Just as it did until recently from the promises of development. But just as one now routinely encounters the 'stink of development', one is also compelled to concede that three centuries of science have raised their own trail of disturbing odours. Not surprisingly, therefore, one discovers that whatever is being said in obituaries about development can equally be said about modern science.

Science and Development: A Congenital Relationship

What has been responsible for the gross influence of science over the imagination of men in our times? One major factor has been the intimate relationship between science and development. They cannot be understood in isolation from each other, as India's policy makers made clear 30 years ago:

The key to national prosperity, apart from the spirit of the people, lies, in the modern age, in the effective combination of three factors, technology, raw materials and capital, of which the first is perhaps the most important, since the creation and adoption of new scientific techniques can in fact make up for a deficiency in national resources and reduce the demands on capital.¹

Generally speaking, development was merely modern science's latest associate in the exercise of its political hegemony. Earlier, science had linked itself with enlightenment and millennial claims, before going on to associate itself with racism, sexism, imperialism and colonialism, and then settling down with development, *an idea in which most of these earlier inheritances are encoded*.

If one, in fact, reflects on the events of recent decades, one is indeed reminded that development and science have run through the period, tied together as intimately as a horse and carriage. Development was desired by us non-Western societies precisely because it was associated with science. What obtained prior to development, either in the form of pure nature or non-Western subsistence, did not have, we were told, the rationality, slickness and efficiency of modern science. People, societies, nature itself were backward because of its absence. Planners labelled entire zones 'backward' simply because they lacked factories. (The factory has remained until today a concrete symbol of the new processes developed by science.) Backwardness was to be substituted by development, an allegedly better way of organizing man and nature based on the rich insights of up-to-date science.

Science, in turn, was desired because it made development possible. If one developed its associated skills, one could have unlimited development and riches. Science and development both reinforced the need for each other; each legitimized the other in a circular fashion popularly rendered: 'I scratch your

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back, you scratch mine.'

If development had had no special relationship with science, there would have been no need to displace subsistence and the new standard of living that development proposed.

However, the relationship between modern science and development was much more than merely intimate: it was congenital. This congenital relationship can be traced back to the industrial revolution when a relationship was first established between science and industry. This should not unduly surprise the reader. Some of the principal laws of science arose originally out of industrial experience. For instance, the Second Law of Thermodynamics resulted from efforts to improve the working of the steam engine with a view to advancing industry.

The Indian scientist, C. V. Seshadri, in a paper on 'Development and Thermodynamics', has provided some original clues to the historical development of this relationship between industry and science. Seshadri found the Second Law of Thermodynamics, on close scrutiny, *ethnocentric*. He charged that, due to its industrial origins, the Second Law had consistently favoured the definition of energy in a way calculated to further the allocation of resources solely for big industry purposes (as opposed to craft). In a related paper, co-authored with V. Balaji, Seshadri wrote:

The law of entropy, backed by its authority, provides a criterion for utilization of energy available from various resources. This criterion, known as the concept of efficiency, is a corollary to the law of entropy and came into existence along with the law. The efficiency criterion stipulates that the loss of available energy in a conversion becomes smaller as the temperature at which the conversion is effected is higher above the ambient. Therefore, high temperatures are of high value and so are resources such as petroleum, coal, etc., which can help achieve such temperatures. In this sense, the law of entropy provides a guideline for the extraction of resources and their utilization.²

Efficiency, perceived in such terms, came to be the leading criterion for judging technologies and productive work. In the light of modern science, more efficiency of this kind was considered synonymous with more development. Yet, in reality, this central concept of modern science is thus fused with a particular kind of resource utilization.

An economy based on this kind of science not only provides itself with a self-serving criterion with which to legitimize itself, it also assumes thereby that it has a justification for taking over all resources hitherto outside its domain and untouched by modern science. Just as economics invented the idea of scarcity to further its domain, so science assumed the idea of thermodynamic efficiency in order to dislodge competition.

Bias Against Nature and Handicraft

As Seshadri pointed out, both nature and non-Western man proved to be losers when the thermodynamic definition of efficiency became the criterion for

development. Both, by definition, overnight became undeveloped or underdeveloped. A tropical monsoon, for example, transporting millions of tonnes of water across the tropics became by definition inefficient since it performed work at ambient (and not high) temperatures.

S. N. Nagarajan agrees:

This is not merely confined to the organic world. Even the evaporation of water, which forms clouds and desalinizes, is not done at 100°C. Life could not have emerged by a process similar to what scientists use, at high temperatures. Scientists are incompetent to construct higher organizations at low temperatures. Tropical agricultural practices were built upon such a kind of knowledge. The two different kinds of approaches have different criteria of efficiency. So the two have a different understanding of development.³

And he adds:

Nature's way is slow, peaceful, non-harmful, non-explosive, non-destructive, both for others and for itself. Take for example, the production of fibre by plants and animals, compared to machines. The end result of plant and machine processes may appear to be the same: fibre and rayon. The machine also produces a large quantity in a short time. But at what cost? The costs are borne by the weaker sections and by nature. The people who are chained to the machine (workers) are also consumed by it.

In fact, all processes or work effected at ambient temperatures are discounted in the suzerainty of modern science. Thus tribals, bamboo workers, honey bees and silkworms all process the resources of the forest at ambient temperatures, and hence without the polluting side-effects of waste heat and effluent associated with big industrial processes. However, in the eyes of development, it is only the high energy input rayon and pulp units that really process the forest resources and contribute to economic growth and production.

Yet modern science still insists: 'The efficiency criterion stipulates that the loss of available energy in a conversion becomes smaller as the temperature at which the conversion is effected is higher above the ambient.' By this means, it in fact destabilizes and exorcizes entire industries and livelihoods. A final illustration, from the production of various kinds of sugar in India can drive home the point.

India produces different forms of sugar. The most important of these are white sugar and *gur*. According to official opinion, the processes used for the extraction and production of white sugar are superior to those that lead to *gur*. Not only is the extractive efficiency of large mills higher, the product (white sugar) stores well. It can be transported and hoarded, and otherwise abused for reasons of state. The attendant pollution wreaked by sugar mills is acknowledged, but is considered a small price to pay for the benefits of progress.

Gur, on the other hand, is mostly manufactured in open furnaces, using agricultural waste, timber or bagasse. The extraction of sugar cane juice is not as high as in the big industry process. The final product also does not keep well

beyond a certain period. However, no pollution results from the production process: neither the earth nor its atmosphere is damaged. And, of course, hoarding and speculation in *gur* is less easy.

From a bare accounting of the two processes, it would seem to be in the public interest for the state to support the replacement of *gur* production with modern sugar mills. *Development is white sugar*. And this is what has occurred in countries like ours in the post-independence period. Credit policy towards farmers in the vicinity of large sugar mills stipulates that if farmers take loans for growing sugar cane from government financial institutions, they are duty bound to sell all their sugar cane only to the large refineries. They may not make *gur* out of it. Special officers of government, designated Sugar Commissioners, actually oversee such development. Indeed, this authoritarianism of development has been upheld by the Supreme Court of India. A farmer was ordered by a Sugar Commissioner to deposit all his sugar cane with a large sugar mill. He refused because he wanted to process it into *gur* instead. The matter went up to the Supreme Court. The Court upheld the orders of the Sugar Commissioner.

A different picture emerges, however, when a closer investigation is made of the *qualities* of the two processes and their end products. We then discover how modern science highlights certain qualities to the exclusion of others and how the blind adoption of its procedures can lead us to emphasize the wrong values. White sugar is dangerous to health for a number of reasons long tested and proven. The bodily processes involved in the metabolism of white sugar end up destabilizing the health of the consumer. In addition, the human body has no physiological requirement for white sugar as such. It is recognized that white sugar is, after all, nothing but empty calories. *Gur*, on the other hand, is a food. It contains not merely sugar, but iron and important vitamins and minerals.

Thus, if the two sugars are compared in the round, *gur* would make a positive contribution to human welfare, whereas white sugar would not. This, however, is not apparent in any comparison of the mere production processes that produce white sugar and *gur*, and in any case the criterion of this comparison resides only in the particular, and biased, terrain of modern science's view of efficient energy conversion. The technology for white sugar production is simply assumed to be more efficient than the technology used in the production of *gur*. Besides, whether it is worth producing a commodity that is harmful to human health and also damages the environment (waste heat and effluents) is not part of the efficiency debate.⁴

Symbolic, nevertheless, of the new status sought for modern science by Third World ruling elites was an international conference on the *Role of Science in the Advancement of New States* held in August 1960, in Israel. At that conference, S. E. Imoke, Minister of Finance for Eastern Nigeria, told his audience:

We do not ask for the moon nor are we anxious for a trip there with you just yet. All we seek is your guidance, assistance and co-operation in our efforts to gather the treasures of our lands, so that we may rise above the subsistence level to a life more abundant.⁵

Revamping Society

The drive to advance big industry in the West was paralleled by an equally powerful project to reorganize society along scientific (i.e. efficient) lines. August Comte set out the general design. His vision of applying the principles of rationality, empiricism and enlightenment to human society in every detail has already had a pervasive influence on the so-called advanced societies.

A roughly similar Comtean vision received a fresh lease of life with the political independence of Third World nations. Here science (the archetypal instrument) was entrusted with the turn-key role of promising undreamed of standards of material well-being to the so-called poor of the planet.

The most well-known specimen of this innocent worldview was Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India. No leader of the Third World was as enamoured of the glamour and promise associated with modern science as Nehru. For him development and science were synonymous. The original Comtean vision is starkly revealed in Nehru's insistence on scientific temper as a *sine qua non* of material advancement. According to him (in his *Discovery of India*), it was science and science alone that 'could solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people.'

This alarming naivety was passed on by him to the country's leading bureaucrats. India adopted a science policy resolution in March 1958, which read in part:

The dominating feature of the contemporary world is the intense cultivation of science on a large scale, and its application to meet a country's requirements. It is this which, for the first time in man's history, has given to the common man in countries advanced in science, a standard of living and social and cultural amenities, which were once confined to a very small privileged minority of the population. Science has led to the growth and diffusion of culture to an extent never possible before. It has not only radically altered man's material environment, but, what is of still deeper significance, it has provided new tools of thought and has extended man's mental horizon. It has thus even influenced the basic values of life, and given to civilization a new vitality and a new dynamism.

Science and technology can make up for deficiencies in raw materials by providing substitutes or, indeed, by providing skills which can be exported in return for raw materials. In industrializing a country, a heavy price has to be paid in importing science and technology in the form of plant and machinery, highly paid personnel and technical consultants. An early and large development of science and technology in the country could therefore greatly reduce the drain in capital during the early and critical state of industrialization.

Science has developed at an ever-increasing pace since the beginning of the century so that the gap between the advanced and backward countries has widened and more. It is only by adopting the most vigorous measures and by putting forward our utmost effort into the development of

science that we can bridge the gap. It is an inherent obligation of a good country like India, with its tradition for scholarship and original thinking and its great cultural heritage, to participate fully in the march of science, which is probably mankind's greatest enterprise today.⁶

Likewise, the authors of the country's First Five Year Plan noted: 'In the planned economy of a country, science must necessarily play a specially important role . . . Planning is science in action, and the scientific method means planning.'

These great 'self-evident truths', however, did not seem so obvious to many ordinary people in the Third World, particularly tribals, peasants and others not yet converted to the Western paradigm. In fact, if the benefits of modern science were not immediately obvious to them, neither did development seem to symbolize a better way of doing routine tasks. On the contrary, development seemed more of a con-game to ordinary folk. To these perspective observers, it actually demanded greater sacrifices, more work, and more boring work, in return for a less secure livelihood. It required the surrender of subsistence (and its related autonomy) in exchange for the dependence and insecurity of wage slavery.

Left to its own, development would have made little headway across the globe. That it did eventually get moving was due purely to the coercive power of the new nation-states which now assumed, in addition to their earlier *controlling* function, a *conducting* function as well. Every nation-state stepped in voluntarily to force development, often with the assistance of police and magistrates. If their citizens were so ignorant that they were unable on their own to recognize the 'benefits of development', the new states would have no option but to 'force them to be free'.

Development became coercion: forced relocations to *ujamaa* villages, compulsory co-operatives, and tying people up in new forms of organization 'for their own good'. Said Abel Alier, Sudan's Southern Regional President, during an Assembly discussion of the controversial Jonglei Canal: 'If we have to drive our people to paradise with sticks, we will do so for their good and the good of those who come after us.' The modern state does not understand, much less accept, the right of people not to be developed.

We must recognize that the state's commitment to development stemmed from its equal commitment to modern science. Science was an ideal choice because it claimed to be able to *remake* reality. It redefined and invented concepts and laws, and thereby remade reality as well. It manufactured new theories about how nature worked, or more important, should work.

Therefore, when the state in the non-Western world assumed the role of developer, desirous of creating a new society and economy, with an entirely new set of temples and all, science naturally became the most attractive and crucial instrument for the purpose. It was Nehru, after all, who called mammoth development projects the 'temples of today'.

Neither people nor nature have been spared as victims of a science-fueled developmentalism driven on by the state. Today, the remaking of nature has become a major preoccupation of officialized ecology. A classic illustration

comes from the approach of scientists to what is called forest development. Foresters are unable to recreate natural forests. But that does not bother them. Instead they redefine forests as plantations, and carry out monocultures under the label of scientific forestry. Nature is thus replaced with a substandard substitute. In reality, the afforestation engineered by modern science becomes the deforestation of nature.

The state claims its right to 'develop' people and nature on the basis of a vision of progress set out in blueprints supplied by modern science, itself a cultural product of the West. The people have no role other than as spectators or cogs in this 'great adventure'. In exchange, they, or some of them at least, are privileged to consume the technological wonders that result from the heady union of development and science. In the eyes of a patronizing state, this is adequate compensation for a surrender of their natural rights. As for those who cannot or will not participate, they must lose their rights. They can be displaced from the resource arena, their resources being transferred instead to big industry.

A Totalitarian Edge

The democratic idea remains the one potential element available to counter these twin oppressions of modernity. For democracies are based on the principle of fundamental human rights. Let us turn to how this potential for checking the totalitarianism of modernity was, however, effectively undermined.

We have probed the congenital links between modern science and development, and the implied bias in science against both nature and handicraft production. We have also discussed how the new nation-states, heavily committed to development, found in this science an attractive instrument for their project of remaking their people in the image of what they believed was an advanced form of man.

Both these features of the modern science/modern state relationship indirectly undermined the natural rights of man. In the first instance, science dismissed all existing processes in nature and traditional technics as inferior or of marginal value, thus enabling big industry (capitalist or statist) to substitute the blueprints supplied by science. Yet in human history, at least up until the scientific and industrial revolutions, the technical knowledge necessary for survival had mostly remained non-centralized and radically dispersed. Literally millions of arts and technologies existed — all using a vast variety of accumulated knowledge and productive of a huge quantum of goods, cultural ideas and symbols stemming from the rich diversity of human experience, and based principally on exploiting processes at ambient temperatures. In many ways, this technical diversity of the human species more or less paralleled the genetic diversity of nature itself.

In the second instance, the very conception of what constituted human normality was itself redefined. People lost the right to claim that they could function as competent human beings unless they underwent the indoctrination required by modernity. It was *a priori* assumed that they were deficient as human beings and had to be remade. As the scientific policy resolution quoted

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earlier noted: 'India's enormous resources of manpower can only become an asset in the modern world when trained or educated.' If in the process they emerged as pale caricatures of human beings in more powerful cultures, this was nothing to worry about. Science and its experts would decide how human beings would be brought up, trained, and entertained, and what they should consume.

This is not too difficult for modern science to achieve primarily because it claims to be associated not only with greater efficiency, but also to have greater explanatory power. What is more, it claims its explanatory power to be superior to anything ever achieved before in the human past, because it alone is impartial and therefore objective. Objectivity was also easy to associate with equality and democracy, since neutrality was beneficial to all. (The biases of monarchical forms of administration, for instance, were notorious.) Modern science therefore seemed ideally suited for modern democracies.

By implication, everything 'non-scientific' was devalued as subjective and arbitrary, of marginal value, and could hardly be made the foundation of public policy.

The so-called scientific revolution of the 17th century constituted a watershed in thinking about thinking. The revolution was successful in insinuating a general consensus that, for the first time in human history, human beings had succeeded in unravelling a method of gaining knowledge as certain as the knowledge that earlier had only been available via revealed scripture. This technique of knowledge acquisition was so reliable that the knowledge acquired thereby was for all practical purposes non-negotiable. It was this claim which would soon conflict with the natural rights of man.

The indisputable knowledge that science presumed to offer was kept outside the arena of politics: in no way was it the consequence of bargaining or choice. In fact, one was no longer at liberty to choose scientific knowledge as an option from among other systems of knowledge. Scientific knowledge was a given. No one was any longer free to reject its statements, as one was free (and often encouraged) to reject the statements of religion or art. The individual who refused to accept the basic scientific worldview risked being labelled not merely ignorant, but obscurantist, deviant or irrational.

Two important points here. First, fallible beings, equipped with an equally fallible instrumentality, reason, were now staking a claim to an infallible method of generating and certifying knowledge. Second, rationality itself was being reduced to nothing more than a narrow and biased scientific rationality which has precious little to do with how the human mind actually thinks, although much to do with how some people think the mind ought to think.

We have to acknowledge that, in its drive for power, modern Western science could hardly afford to be diffident about the nature of its claims. It was compelled by its own premises to concentrate and arbitrate all epistemes, and to pretend to do so impersonally. As the need for certification increased, so did modern science become less democratic and access to knowledge itself turned into a matter of privilege and special training. The layman was now seen as an empty receptacle to be filled up with the contents of science. He was to forgo his own knowledge and knowledge-rights.

Another curious paradox here. Scientific reason operated with a logic that

was allegedly independent of personal factors or whims. It aimed at the formulation of laws existing independently of persons. Yet its certifiers were persons, often persons who had a vested interest in the power of science, and who were dependent on it for their livelihood. Fallible individuals thus exploited the prestige associated with their discipline to gain a share of political power. The ballot was surreptitiously replaced, increasingly by the new scientific priesthood indoctrinated by its shared assumptions.

This, of course, was diametrically opposed to democratic functioning where rights are unique and universal and belong to individuals primarily because they are members of the species. Such rights include the right to claim true knowledge and the right to reject impersonal knowledge. A right which, in other words, includes the power to certify knowledge. Under the new tyranny of modern science, such rights were first assaulted, then extinguished, and ordinary people were no longer considered as being capable by the fruit of their own activity of providing or obtaining true and certain knowledge of the world. This political right was taken away from all people falling within the ambit of science's dictatorship. In fact, for the ruling classes which felt that human rights had been too early democratized, or unnecessarily so, science now provided an instrument by which they could take back with the one hand what they had earlier been compelled to give away with the other.

Thus planning, science and technology — the technocracy — now became the principal means for usurping the people's rights to the domains of knowledge and production for dismissing the people's right to create knowledge, and diminishing their right to intervene in matters of public interest or affecting their own subsistence and survival.

The non-negotiability of modern science, the much vaunted objectivity of scientific knowledge, the seeming neutrality of its information, all these seemed positive features to most reasonable and educated men of different religions, values and nations. Rationality, the scientific temper and modern education seemed indisputable and necessary assets to human life.

However, while science itself advanced its knowledge by dissent, by the clash of hypotheses, it summarily dismissed dissent from outside the scientific imperium regarding either its content or its methods and mode of rationality. The non-negotiability of scientific assumptions, methods and knowledge became a powerful myth elaborately constructed over several centuries, fed by a feigned ignorance among its propagandists concerning how it had actually negotiated its rise and apparently unassailable position.

Scientific knowledge — seen as above emotion, caste, community, language, religion, and transnational — became the preferred and primary instrument for transformation not only above the interest of all, but more importantly, enforceable on all. Never, in fact, was there so much agreement among the intellectuals of so many nations, whether liberals, communists, reactionaries, Gandhians, conservatives, or even revolutionaries: all succumbed to the totalitarian temptation of science.

What we have said concerning the power relationship of modern science with other epistemologies is also true of what came to obtain between it and technics. Development based on it came to constitute a dynamic (actively

colonizing) power, committed to compromising the survival possibilities and niches of larger and larger masses of people. By and large, it found the people's knowledge competitive and therefore offensive. And since it maintained a contemptuous attitude towards folk science, it also treated people's rights to use resources in their own way with scant respect.

Most important of all, the modern state's interest in such development itself owed much to the latter's constant search for ways and means to compromise, erode, and oftentimes severely diminish, personal autonomy, and the creativity and political freedom that went with it. In a democracy, people can govern themselves, but they can hardly do so if their governments are seriously attempting at the same time to see whether they can be successfully managed and changed.

Once the ordinary people's epistemologic rights were devalued, the state could proceed to use allegedly scientific criteria to supplant such rights with officially sponsored and defined perceptions and needs.

Science's propaganda, that it alone provided a valid description of nature, was turned into a stick with which to beat trans-scientific, or folk-scientific, descriptions of nature. The various 'people's science movements' in India took this job quite seriously, by functioning as an unofficial establishment, gallantly attempting to replace the science of the village sorcerer or *tantrik* with the barbarism of modern science's electric shock treatment or frontal lobotomies.

This expansion of the domain of scientific epistemology involved the most sustained deprivation of others' epistemologic rights. State policy being committed to this one epistemology exclusively, abused or ignored others. In medicine, to take just one example, the bias exercised against Indian systems of healing in favour of imported allopathy needs little documentation.

All imperiums are intolerant and breed violence. The arrogance of science concerning its epistemology led it actively to replace alternatives with its own, superimposing on nature new and artificial processes. Naturally, the exercise provoked endless and endemic violence and suffering as the perceptions of modern science sat clumsily and inappropriately on natural systems. Thus, just as the Europeans eliminated millions of indigenous Indians from North and South America and other indigenous populations elsewhere to make place for their own kind, and just as their medicine uprooted other medicine, and their seeds displaced other seed, so their knowledge project called modern science attempted to ridicule and wipe out all other ways of seeing, doing and having.

Knowledge is power, but power is also knowledge. Power decides what is knowledge and what is not knowledge. Thus modern science actually attempted to suppress even non-competitive, but different ways of interacting with man, nature and the cosmos. It warred to empty the planet of all divergent streams of episteme in order to assert the unrivalled hegemony of its own batch of rules and set of perceptions, the latter being clearly linked with the aggressive thrusts of Western culture.

It is an illusion to think that modern science expanded possibilities for real knowledge. In actual fact, it made knowledge scarce. It over-extended certain frontiers, eliminated or blocked others. Thus it actually narrowed down the possibilities for enriching knowledge available to human experience. It did

appear to generate a phenomenal information explosion. But information is information, not knowledge. The most that can be said of information is that it is but knowledge in degraded, distorted form. Science should have been critically understood not as an instrument for expanding knowledge, but for colonizing and controlling the direction of knowledge, and consequently human behaviour, within a straight and narrow path conducive to the design of the project.

Is, then, the defeat total? No. The planet has not succumbed to appropriation by modern science everywhere. Indeed the outward symbols of science — agribusiness food, nuclear reactors, gigantic dams — are facing rebellion across the globe. And if those who have tasted the empty fruits of modern science are disillusioned with them, others have refused to taste them at all. Millions of farmers, for instance, reject the modern rice strains manufactured by cereal research centres controlled by agribusiness. Citizens across the planet are rejecting modern allopathic medicine to varying degrees. Millions of ordinary people reject the idea of living by the distorting (and distorted) values associated with modern science.

In a country like India, 40 years of state sponsorship of science and all its works have been unable to bolster its failing reputation. In 1976, the late Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi made the propagation of the scientific temper one of the fundamental duties of Indian citizens, and amended the Constitution accordingly. Despite this there is an even greater sense of crisis among the Indian scientific community, which finds itself every decade more and more out of tune with Indian society's principal preoccupations.

This sense of failure has irreversibly crippled much of the thrust to push India into the straitjacket prepared for it by the project of modern science. The people in non-Western societies do not merely not co-operate with its principal designs, they indicate they do not care a fig for the West and its creations.

In many areas, the non-co-operation has become aggressive. People, groups, villages have openly rejected modernizing development and stubbornly insisted on maintaining their ways of life, their ambient interactions with nature, and the arts of subsistence. The revolt against development is bound to be at another level a revolt against modern science and the violence it symbolizes. This was Mahatma Gandhi's view. It will eventually become the view of those interested in protecting the natural rights of man and nature everywhere.

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3. S. N. Nagarajan, in a personal communication to the author dated 7 May 1990.
4. See Claude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, for a detailed argument.

6. The entire Science Policy Resolution is to be found in Ward Morehouse, op. cit., pp. 138-40.

7. Quoted in E. Goldsmith and N. Hillyard, *The Social and Environmental Effects of Large Dams*, Wadebridge: Wadebridge Ecological Centre, 1984, p. 18.

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Stunning critiques of science have emerged from gifted practitioners of life husbandry. In the field of agriculture there is M. Fukuoka, *The One Straw Revolution*, Hoshangabad: Friend's Rural Centre, 1985, and in the field of health M. Kothari & L. Mehta, *Cancer: Myths and Realities*, London: Boyars, 1979, and *Death*, London: Boyars, 1986. I. Richards, *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and Food Production in West Africa*, London: Hutchinson, 1985, testifies to the appropriateness of indigenous knowledge of cultivation, while F. Apffel-Marglin, 'Smallpox in Two Systems of Knowledge', in F. Apffel-Marglin & S. Marglin, *Dominating Knowledge*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1990, pp. 102-44, shows the inner cultural logic of a non-scientific way of seeing smallpox. Furthermore, there is obviously a long history of non-Western science. Thanks to the monumental work of J. Needham et al., *Science and Civilization in China*, Vols. 1-7, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954, rich material on China is available, while Dharmapal, *Indian Science and Technology in the 18th Century*, New Delhi: Impex, 1971, highlights the Indian patrimony of knowledge before colonization. S. Goonatilake, *Aborted Discovery: Science and Creativity in the Third World*, London: Zed Books, 1983, discusses the attempts and difficulties in redefining science from a non-Western perspective.

But no work of academia can be as compelling as human experience. Enmeshed in day to day village cosmology, it was not too long before the scales fell off quickly from my eyes. If one attempts to live close to the peasants or within the bosom of nature, modern science is perceived differently: as vicious, arrogant, politically powerful, wasteful, violent, unmindful of other ways. Life in Thane, a village north-east of the state of Goa, on India's West Coast, and for the past six years in Parra, a more accessible coastal village, provided me with enough education to see through the emperor's new clothes.

Socialism

Harry Cleaver

One of the longest standing critiques of capitalist development has been that of the socialists. From pre-Marxian analyses of the way capitalist development generates extreme poverty and suffering alongside extreme concentrations of wealth, through Marx's dissection of capitalist exploitation and class antagonism, through Luxemburg, Bukharin and Lenin's work on imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, to more contemporary critiques of dependency, socialists have lambasted the international expansion of capitalist social relations as a process which has brought misery rather than improvements in living conditions for the vast majority of the world's peoples. Rather than 'developing' the Third World, they say, capitalism has 'underdeveloped' it — made things worse than they were when it was still 'undeveloped', i.e. free of the imposition of capitalist class relations.

Yet, at the same time, rather than abandoning the development project, socialists have consistently proposed the adoption of an alternative 'socialist development'. This has been the case primarily since the construction of socialism in the USSR provided a real life alternative to capitalism, and not just a theory. The extremely rapid (by historical standards) industrialization of the USSR, which at the time of the Revolution of 1917 was still an overwhelmingly agrarian society, convinced many of the superiority of socialist over capitalist development, of socialism over capitalism, *tout court*.

This was particularly true in the Third World where anti-colonialism often came to include anti-capitalism and many intellectuals in the independence movements were impressed with Soviet efforts to foster socialist development and began to consider ways such measures might be adapted to their own circumstances. Such intellectuals included both revolutionaries and those who sought more peaceful change. Already, by 1920, Mao Zedong had been drawn to Marxism and the struggle for socialism, in part by the Soviet example. By 1927 Jawaharlal Nehru, returning from the Brussels Congress of Oppressed Nationalities and a visit to Moscow, was ready to proclaim that his goal was socialism, as well as the independence he had hitherto pursued as a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1936, he enunciated a view of the relationship between socialism and development which would be shared by a generation of leaders throughout the Third World: 'I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism.'

Elsewhere in the British Empire, similar socialist visions would be repeated, as with Kwame Nkrumah in the Gold Coast (Ghana), Julius Nyerere in Tanganyika (Tanzania), and Eric Williams in Trinidad & Tobago. Against the French Empire, leaders such as Ho Chi Minh in Indochina, Ben Bella in Algeria, Léopold Senghor in Senegal, Modibo Keita in Mali, and Sékou Touré in Guinea, also sought some form of socialism or communism beyond