CONTENTS

1.	**The Sprit of Labour** **The Idea of Work** *by Ela Bhatt, Renana Jhabvala* *by P. Sainath* **Building a Creative Freedom:** **J C Kumarappa and His Economic Philosophy** *by Venu Madhav Govindu, Deepak Malghan* **Feminist Perspectives on Class and Work** *From Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* **The Scandinavian Model** **STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION** *by Jonathan Power*	LABOUR	1
2.	**The End of the End of History** *by John Gray*	DEVELOPMENT THEORY	25
3.	**The Non-Profit & The Autonomous Grassroots** *by Eric Tang*	STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT	29
4.	**The New Economics of Ecological Capital** *by John Vidal*	NEW ECONOMICS	41
5.	**Paradigm Shift Ecological Capital** *by John Vidal*	TRADITION & MODERNITY	45

13

The Spirit of Labour

Labour. Work. Employment.

Those of us who maintain that the human being is at the centre of our discourse need to re-visit the significance of these terms.

Barely thirty years ago one could convince a youth that labour created ‘surplus value’, and that this value was ‘appropriated’ by the feudal lord or the owners of a business or enterprise - capitalists.

But now, at a time when some kinds of work, even those entailing extreme drudgery, acquire esteem mainly in terms of the money brought into one’s life; when every youth’s dream, or rather imperative, is to make a pile of money here and now; and where the labour put into a product or service to enhance its value is discounted; - so now, assertions of the importance of labour, right to employment, conditions of work, and security of employment sound archaic, unreal and even vacuous.

Hence, whether it is the issue of maintaining high interest rates for the Employees Provident Fund, or of Guaranteeing Employment or Security of Employment, we seem to have diluted, if not totally abdicated, our earlier positions on these issues in the face of an overwhelming neo-liberal onslaught.

In this context, guaranteeing employment, as opposed to just a dole, is a vital necessity. But we cannot leave it at that. It is just a starting point. In times like these we need to take the discourse of labour, work and employment beyond the narrow economistic confines, to the realm of human initiative, occupation, personal fulfillment, and social engagement.

There are traditions in India that dwell on these issues, and there are modern conceptions of labour, employment and work, some of these very Indian – not the least being Gandhi's perspective.

Ela Bhatt and Renana Jhabvala probe these concepts of work and employment, largely inspired by the prolonged work in SEWA, and take the issue beyond survival, to social, fulfilling arenas of work and employment in decentralized economic activity, and extended to cooperative economic systems.

Venu Madhav Govindu and Deepak Malghan revisit the very contemporary notions of one of Gandhi's close follower – J C Kumarappa.

The Stanford Encyclopedia on feminist perspectives and **Jonathan Power** on women in the Scandinavian Model provide further insights into work and social, economic and political relationships.

The Idea of Work, *Ela Bhatt, Renana Jhabvala,* Economic and Political Weekly Special Articles, November 27, 2004. http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2004&leaf=11&filename=7953&filetype=html [C.ELDOC1. 0511/The_Idea.htm]

Building a Creative Freedom: J C Kumarappa and His Economic Philosophy, *Venu Madhav Govindu, Deepak Malghan,* Economic and Political Weekly, Special Articles, December 24, 2005. http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2005&leaf=12&filename=9504&filetype=html [C.ELDOC1. 0602/DD1-1bBuilding-a-Creative-Freedom4.html]

Feminist Perspectives on Class and Work, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, October 01, 2004. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-class/ [C.ELDOC 0602/DD1-1cFeminist-Perspectives-on-Class-and-Work.html]

The Scandinavian model, *Jonathan Power*, International Herald Tribune, July 13, 2005.
http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/07/13/opinion/web.edpower.php
[C.ELDOC1.0512/Scandinavian-model.html]

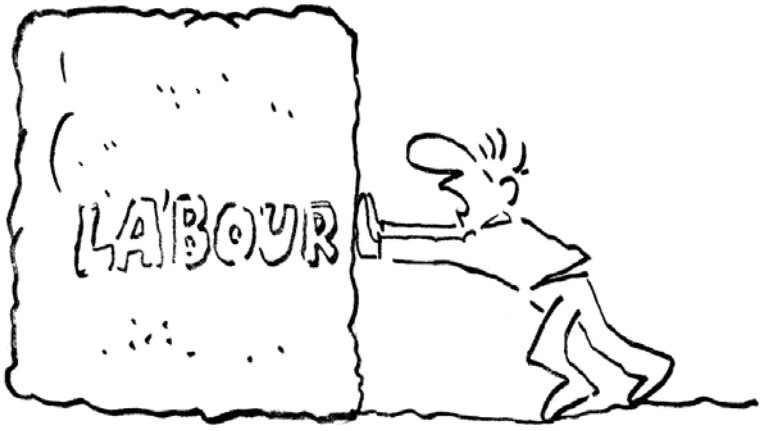
The Idea of Work

Ela Bhatt, Renana Jhabvala

The laws and policies that women face are based on attitudes and theories about work, which are far from the reality on the ground. Work is seen as labour, or as jobs where there is an 'employment relationship'. Only a certain type of work is productive and worthy of investment and credit, most work is 'unproductive'.

Definitions of Work

Mainstream economics uses the terms 'labour' and 'employment' for work. Although there are alternative theories of economics, most notably the Marxian approach, today neo-classical theories have come to dominate the thinking on economics in most countries.



"Labouring has always been identified with onerous activity. It is derived from the Latin (labor), implying toil, distress and trouble. Labor are meant to do heavy, onerous activity… is derived from the Latin 'trepateiure', meaning to torture with a nasty instrument. And the Greek

word for labour ‘panos’, signified pain and effort, and has the same root as the word for poverty, penia” [Standing 2002:243].

Employment is a somewhat broader concept than labour, and is used in different ways. It is mainly used to determine the number of people earning an income engaged in production for the market.

Employment became an important measure when ‘full-employment’ become one of the main goals of policies and responsibilities of governments.

In a more philosophical vein, based on European thought, Hannah Arendt gives a somewhat different interpretation to the idea of work, by making a distinction between labour, work and action. ‘Labour’ is the

activity which maintains and sustains the biological processes of life. ‘Work’ begins with the distinction between man and animal, between biology and the ‘man-made’. Labour insures not only individual survival, but the life of the species. “Work and its product, the human artefact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time. Action, insofar as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the conditions for remembrance, that is, for history” [Arendt 1970:8].

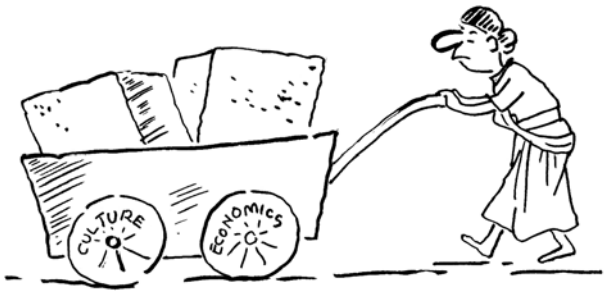
Bhagvat Gita. Here the definition of work is very broad and includes all man’s interactions with ‘Prakriti’ or nature. Prakriti is the functioning of

the world. Work includes the maintenance of the body as well as actions that are required for its maintenance. These include the actual functioning of the body – eating, sleeping and other bodily functions; the work or labour required to obtain the materials - such as food, required for these functions; as well as the actions of the social being – thinking, feeling and the interactions with others. The distinction is not between the social and the natural, but between Prakriti and the Self or soul.

Holistic Ways of Looking at Work: An Indian Perspective

Anthropologists discuss different ways in which cultures view themselves. Louis Dumont defines two ways of self-definition by cultures – individualism and holism. In an individualistic society a person defines himself independent of relationships and based on 'impersonal' elements such as abstract rights, attributes desires, preferences and even professional occupations. In holistic societies an individual defines himself in relation to society as a whole and sees himself as the nexus of a web of relationships.

In the modern economy the idea of work is purely individualistic. The worker is one who enters the market and exchanges her work for money because the only way she can meet her basic needs is as a consumer. The person whose identity is that of a worker and a consumer in a market-dominated society, acquires a certain identity and a relationship with her work. The worth of her work is the worth of the income she receives. Often her work may be physically hard, as is generally the case with labour. Often, she may feel bad about her work because she does not feel part of the results or she feels exploited. In these cases she attempts to do as little work as possible for the income she receives. And she compensates the unpleasantness by consuming 'leisure'.



In a country like India, attitudes of people towards their work are determined by an interplay of cultures and economic forces. The modern economy brings about a mindset of competition, individualism and a drive towards ever-expanding consumerism. On the other hand, cultural and traditional ways of thinking are often in a different direction.

Work and Social Systems

In India, social systems have always been more or less synonymous with the caste system, and social relations were defined by relations within castes and between castes. Although women's roles were well defined and lead to a certain amount of security, there were definite inequalities within the relationship, which often lead to a downgrading of women's work and position.

Although descriptions of the caste system generally identify four major castes, in practice there are thousands of them, all identified with a particular work. The people and their communities identified themselves with their work. They assumed their names from their occupational work. They married amongst their own occupational community. Their social systems were organised around their work. Their occupation was the basis on which they built their lives, culture, communities and institutions. In so many ways, it was their primary means of interaction and participation in society.

Work with the Community

Work occupies the better part of the day for most people. Partly through actually doing work and partly through learning from others, a worker develops his skills, and a person with more and superior skills is better respected in the community. When people value themselves and their work they feel a pride in themselves and a dignity about what they do. Work is often done with other people and is seen as a group activity. Working together is a way of sharing and relating to others.

Good work is that which is done not only for oneself but for others. Of course, one has to do work in order to live and satisfy one's needs. But those needs should be kept to the minimum. Furthermore, non-attachment requires that one should not be attached to, desirous of, the fruits of one's work.

Different Forms of Work, Better Ways of Working

Here we would like to try and define some of the elements which constitute better work. That is work which gives self-respect and dignity to the worker, in which the worker and her work are integrated as part of a larger community, even of a larger cosmos, and work which, while fulfilling the needs of the individual, is in many ways 'unselfish' or selfless.

The question that then arises is what should the structures of production and distribution be in order to have better work. This question cannot be approached in the abstract, in an idealised or distant past or future society, but must be placed in the context of the structures and relationships and the economy that exists today. The main features of such an economy would be to build structures that place the needs of the most vulnerable at the centre, that have more co-operative and decentralised methods of production and distribution.

The Most Vulnerable at the Centre

The first principle of a society that provides better work is to ensure that the poorest and the most vulnerable are provided with their basic needs. We are arguing not only for individual sympathy for the weak and disadvantaged, but for a social system which systematically focuses on the vulnerable and where the social structures, and more especially the economic structures and work structures, are designed to meet the

needs of the most vulnerable groups. **In India, a coherent concept of a 'good' society was developed during the era of the freedom struggle. This concept of Swaraj or self-governance was seen not merely as a political system managed by and for Indians, but as the basis for a better society. "The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint" [M K Gandhi 1962 edition: 3]. And this concept would be the basis of a better society – If Swaraj was not meant to civilise us and to purify and stabilise our civilisation it would be worth nothing. The very essence of civilisation is that we give a paramount place to morality in all our affairs public and private" [ibid: 5].**

In SEWA we have seen that working for others, and especially working for the most vulnerable creates a force and energy that builds a movement.

Although the importance of focusing on poverty and the poor is emphasised in macro-economic policy it is generally not seen as the driving principle of economic life. In fact the poor are seen as marginal to economic life as a whole and to be taken care of through special schemes and safety nets. We are proposing that the economic structure be such that deprivation cannot exist. That is, every person must get his or her minimum needs. It requires a moral society to focus on the poorest. But it also requires structures which would identify these poorest and which would then have a system of social production where the minimum needs are satisfied. This leads us into our next criteria for a structure for better work – decentralised forms of production.

Economic Decentralisation

Arguing for economic decentralisation is a difficult task. Although it is accepted today that political decentralisation is required for a vibrant and active democracy, centralisation of production, of skills and of ownership of resources is seen as leading to a more efficient economy. Here we would like to put forward some arguments to suggest the need for more decentralisation of production and distribution of goods and services as well as decentralisation of ownership of resources.

Our first argument for economic decentralisation follows from the last point of focusing on the most vulnerable. Identification of the most

vulnerable is a major exercise, where a number of criteria have to be accepted and the people fitting those criteria to be identified. Reaching the poorest is a major administrative exercise if conducted centrally. A more efficient administrative system would be one where food, clothing and other minimum requirements are distributed locally. It would be even more efficient if much of the required needs are locally produced and only a certain amount imported. This does not argue that local areas are unconnected with mainstream markets, but merely that a certain minimum amount of produce needs to be grown and distributed locally. New technologies and inputs could boost this local production and linking with the market would encourage production of surplus as well as import of products which cannot be produced locally.

The second argument is related to justice and equality. Within most countries and also across nations, the distribution and ownership of wealth tends to be concentrated in certain areas. Generally the wealthier areas attract more resources and the poorer areas lose them.

Economic decentralisation is one way (although not necessarily the only way) of distribution of resources. The third argument is connected with 'holistic work'. We have seen that in many societies and especially among women, work is satisfying and creative if it is part of the individual, community and social life. Decentralised production and services for local use mean that part of the production can be for own use and part for exchange, (as we saw at sewa in the case of embroidery workers). Furthermore, this type of production is linked to local cultures and local designs and leads to far greater control of

people over what they should produce, and how it is to be used. It has been found that where local communities have a greater control over these resources, they preserve and regenerate the resource.

Economic decentralisation would lead to two separate trends, both of which would be beneficial to women. First, it would strengthen local markets and local skills and make the markets more accessible to women. Second, it would raise the value of non-monetary work, as work acquires a more holistic meaning and comes to include work done for maintenance of a larger society, including all forms of community and service work.

Economic decentralisation is often criticised on the grounds that it shuts local communities off from the skills, knowledge, resources and opportunities available outside the community, and makes them inward turning. **What is being argued here is not a cutting off from larger opportunities but a redressal of the balance. Just as political decentralisation does not mean that national and state governments disappear when local government is empowered, so also local production can and should link into larger systems of production, local markets can and do link into national and international ones and local ownership of resources links into larger systems of ownership.**

Co-operative Economic Systems

People work for the physical and social maintenance of themselves, their families and their communities, and it is necessary that they do such work, if life is to go on. However, an 'unselfish attitude' requires firstly, that along with maintenance of individual selves, there should also be a constant awareness of maintenance of the cosmos as part of the work; and secondly, the self should not be 'attached' to the results of the work. This attitude towards work requires a constant awareness of others, of working for and serving a larger community; at the same time a minimising of one's own needs and desires.
Co-operative forms of work are also more likely to be adopted by the poor or by those who have less resources. Co-operation is one way of pooling resources and hence increasing control. It is also a way of increasing the bargaining power of those who are weak. It can be seen as the best form to meet minimum needs of every individual. Unselfish work is often questioned as an unrealistic concept, especially where

maximising of individual utility is the basis underlining modern day economics.

However, there is a rich literature on altruistic behaviour of individuals where unselfish goals are part of maximising individual utility, and some literature which goes beyond maximising behaviour of the individual into 'tuism' where the relationships with others are an end in themselves and, as Zamagni has argued, not just a means for individual satisfaction.

Co-operative forms of work are also often questioned because the dominant mode today is of individuals interacting with the market and often competing. Is co-operation really feasible, and if it was, why do we not see it working today? In fact, if one examines the reality, cooperative forms of production exist today far more than is realised. The European Union's social economy is estimated to consist of 900,000 enterprises and represents 10 per cent of GDP and employment. Formal registered cooperatives too exist worldwide. Ranging from small-scale to multi-million dollar businesses across the globe, co-operatives are estimated to employ more than 100 million women and men and have more than 800 million individual members. They operate mainly in agricultural marketing and supply, finance, wholesale and retailing, health care, housing and insurance, but are venturing into new fields such as information and communication technology, tourism and cultural industries. Co-operative enterprises, organisations and/ groups are abundant in the informal economy, especially in developing countries, although so far there has been no attempt to measure these.
Our experience in SEWA has shown that co-operative economic organisations are not only feasible for poor women but that they bring about better work in a number of different ways. First, organisation gives women who are the most vulnerable a new identity through their work,

an identity where they are respected because of their work, and the contribution of their work is acknowledged by society and by their own families. Second, cooperation allows them to build an enterprise and reach markets directly instead of being at the mercy of traders and others who exploit their lack of access to markets. Third, they are able to pool their resources – their capital, their knowledge and their skills. Fourth, they are able to avail of government schemes and programmes, which is difficult for them to do individually. Finally, their coming together into a viable organisation increases their voice and bargaining power in society and in the market.

Building a Creative Freedom: J C Kumarappa and His Economic Philosophy

Venu Madhav Govindu, Deepak Malghan

Kumarappa's deep rooted concern for individual autonomy is best seen in his writings on the nature of work. Some four decades before "good work" became a slogan of the appropriate technology movement, Kumarappa called for a philosophical understanding of the fundamental nature of work that was independent of the form of economic or social organisation. For Kumarappa, this started with the rejection of the conception of work as mere drudgery, a characterisation he traced to the Judeo-Christian tradition where work is seen as a "curse from god":

> 'By the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread' was the punishment meted out to Adam for his disobedience. Since then man has been trying hard to circumvent this curse. He wants to eat bread but does not want to sweat.

For Kumarappa, work has "two important components" – the "creative element which makes for the development and happiness of the individual", and "toil or drudgery". If the "real purpose of work" is to "develop man's higher faculties", both the creative and drudgery parts are equally important and separating them was akin to separating fat from milk – a healthy body needs not just the fat but also the nutrients in the whey. More significantly, this separation of drudgery from the creative aspect of work is one of the fundamental sources of violence. To the extent that toil is characterised as a necessary evil, coercion and thus violence that follows become inevitable. For Kumarappa, the "strong have always attempted to divide work and allocate the heavy part to the worker and retain to themselves the higher and the more pleasant part". Indeed, this violence at the individual level also operates at a much larger level and punctuates the rise and fall of entire civilisations:

> [T]he ancient empires of Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome worked [by] shifting the unpleasant part of activity, by which pleasure can be had, on to the captives made into slaves. By depriving masses of men of their freedom such empires flourished for a while and disappeared.

Kumarappa clearly recognised the impact economic organisation had on the political structure obtained in a society: “Large-scale industries in economics is the anti-thesis of democracy in politics”. He went on to suggest that one of the motivating powers of the imperial project was the coercive division of labour, which none of the dominant forms of economic and social organisation had been able to address. An average worker is reduced to “gun-fodder” for the machine under a capitalistic organisation-based on large centralised industries, or a “cogwheel in a machine” under communism. Thus, while the economic structure largely determined the choices available to individuals, for Kumarappa, a non-violent social organisation had to base itself on freedom and autonomy for every individual. However, he went on to qualify that we may not “entirely ban [the] profit motive nor advocate complete decentralisation. What we want to find is a mean between capitalism and communism”. While he critiqued coercive methods, Kumarappa was also no naive advocate of a cooperative basis for large-scale social organisation.

While it may be granted that group activity has a contribution to make within a limited community, it is open to serious doubt whether such activity is possible on a national scale for any length of time. A few idealists may get together and run an Ashram or other philanthropic institutions on the basis of service. But whether such principles can be applied in the present stage of varied and varying civilisations on a world basis may be questioned.

Feminist Perspectives on Class and Work

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

A good place to situate the start of theoretical debates about women, class and work is in the intersection with Marxism and Feminism. Such debates were shaped not only by academic inquiries but as questions about the relation between women's oppression and liberation and the class politics of the left, trade union and feminist movements in the late 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in the U.S., Britain and Europe. It will also be necessary to consider various philosophical approaches to the concept of work, the way that women's work and household activities are subsumed or not under this category, how the specific features of this work may or may not connect to different “ways of knowing” and different approaches to ethics, and the debate between essentialist and social constructionist approaches to differences between the sexes as a base for the sexual division of labor in most known human societies.

The relation of women as a social group to the analysis of economic class has spurred political debates within both Marxist and Feminist circles as to whether women's movements challenging male domination can assume a common set of women's interests across race, ethnicity, and class. If there are no such interests, on what can a viable women's movement be based, and how can it evade promoting primarily the interests of white middle class and wealthy women? To the extent to which women do organize themselves as a political group cutting across traditional class lines, under what conditions are they a conservative influence as opposed to a progressive force for social change?

If poor and working class women's issues are different than middle and upper class women's issues, how can middle class women's movements be trusted to address them? In addition to these questions, there is a set of
issues related to cross-cultural comparative studies of women, work and relative power in different societies, as well as analyses of how women's work is connected to processes of globalisation.

Marxism as a philosophy of human nature stresses the centrality of work in the creation of human nature itself and human self-understanding. Both the changing historical relations between human work and nature,

and the relations of humans to each other in the production and distribution of goods to meet material needs construct human nature differently in different historical periods: nomadic humans are different than agrarian or industrial humans. Marxism as a philosophy of history and social change highlights the social relations of work in different economic modes of production in its analysis of social inequalities and exploitation, including relations of domination such as racism and sexism

The rise of capitalism, in separating the family household from commodity production, further solidifies this control of men over women in the family, with the latter becoming economic dependents of the former in the male breadwinner / female housewife nuclear family form. Importantly, capitalism also creates the possibility of women's liberation from family-based patriarchy by creating possibilities for women to work in wage labor and become economically independent of husbands and fathers.

With a different historical twist, Hartmann argues that a historical bargain was cemented between capitalist and working class male patriarchs to shore up patriarchal privileges that were being weakened by the entrance of women into wage labor in the 19th century by the creation of the “family wage” to allow men sufficient wages to support a non-wage-earning wife and children at home (1981a). While Ferguson and Folbre (1981) agree that there is no inevitable fit between capitalism and patriarchy, they argue that there are conflicts, and that the family wage bargain has broken down at present. Indeed, both Ferguson and Smart (1984) argue that welfare state capitalism and the persistent sexual division of wage labor in which work coded as women's is paid less than men's with less job security are ways that a “public patriarchy” has replaced different systems of family patriarchy that were operating in early and pre-capitalist societies.

Thus, the new “marriage” of patriarchal capitalism operates to relegate women to unpaid or lesser-paid caring labor, whether in the household or in wage labor, thus keeping women by and large unequal to men. This is especially notable in the rise of poor single-mother-headed families. However, as it forces more and more women into wage labor, women are given opportunities for some independence from men and the possibility to challenge male dominance and sex segregation in all

spheres of social life. Examples are the rise of the first and second wave women's movements and consequent gains in civil rights for women.

Realizing the importance of this disjuncture between economic class and sex class for women, Maxine Molyneux (1984) argues in a often cited article that there are no “women's interests” in the abstract that can unify women in political struggle. Instead, she theorizes that women have both “practical gender interests” and “strategic gender interests.” Practical gender interests are those that women develop because of the sexual division of labor, which makes them responsible for the nurturant work of sustaining the physical and psychological well-being of children, partners and relatives through caring labor. Such practical gender interests, because they tie a woman's conception of her own interests as a woman to those of her family, support women's popular movements for food, water, child and health care, even defense against state violence, which ally them with the economic class interests of their family. Strategic gender interests, on the contrary, may ally women across otherwise divided economic class interests, since they are those, like rights against physical male violence and reproductive rights, which women have as a sex class to eliminate male domination.

Molyneux used her distinctions between practical and strategic gender interests to distinguish between the popular women's movement in Nicaragua based on demands for economic justice for workers and farmers against the owning classes, demands such as education, health and maternity care, clean water, food and housing, and the feminist movement which emphasized the fight for legal abortion, fathers' obligation to pay child support to single mothers, and rights against rape and domestic violence. She and others have used this distinction between practical and strategic gender interests to characterize the tension between popular women's movements and feminist movements in Latin America. Postmodernists, on the other hand, emphasize on intersectional differences, that commonalities in women's gendered work can create a cross-class base for demanding a collective political voice for women: a transnational feminism which creates a demand for women's political representation, developing the platform of women's human rights as women and as workers. Nonetheless, the tension between women's economic class-based interests or needs and their visionary/strategic gender interests or needs is always present, and must therefore always be negotiated concretely by popular movements for social justice involving women's issues.

Theoretical and empirical debates about the relation of women to class and work, and the implications of these relations for theories of male domination and women's oppression as well as for other systems of social domination, continue to be important sources of theories and investigations of gender identities, roles and powers in the field of women and gender studies, as well as in history, sociology, anthropology and economics. They also have important implications for epistemology, metaphysics and political theory in the discipline of philosophy, and consequently other disciplines in humanities and the social sciences.

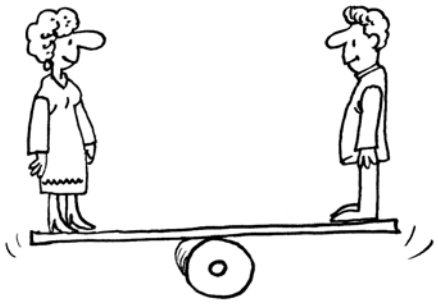
The Scandinavian model

Jonathan Power

'Women hold up half the sky,' said Mao Zedong, though by and large, in Communist China women had a tough time playing second fiddle to the men. Here in Sweden women do almost hold up half the sky. If Anna Lindh, who was foreign minister, had not been murdered last year, there might well be a female prime minister in power. For a decade, half the cabinet have been women, and women occupy nearly 50 percent of the seats in Parliament.

It shows. When the government ventures to suggest that it is thinking about raising taxes in this most highly taxed of nations to pay for better health and social services, the country takes the news quietly. When the government decides to cut back on military spending, likewise. The country, long socially progressive, has now copper-bottomed its welfare state by putting women in the driver's seat.

According to the UN Human Development Report, the Swedes have had more success in producing equality between the sexes than any other country on earth. Come to Sweden and unravel the mystery of how such



an economy, riddled with expensive props for encouraging women to work — free child care, yearlong maternity leave, flexible working hours- outdoes nearly every other European economy year after year and runs neck and neck with Britain's growth rate and Tony Blair's much touted, but seriously misunderstood, Anglo-Saxon model.

In fact, Sweden is swamped by visitors from 10 Downing Street avid to absorb the lessons Sweden has to give.

The so-called Anglo-Saxon model, virulent in its opposition to the corporatist, Franco-German social model, is, not so stealthily, using its ever growing capitalist-produced wealth to adopt an even more socialistic model — the truly dynamic Scandinavian one. The attraction for Tony Blair is that private enterprise is at least as free as in Britain, women are at the center of working life and while Scandinavian social security payments are generous, they all come with an obligation to find work or retrain. There is always a route out of poverty in Sweden, but to take it and receive the handsome social security payments, recipients have to undertake training for new careers. American observers who think Britain is moving into their social camp have got Tony Blair quite wrong. But then so have much of the German and French ruling elites.

Well, do come to Sweden! Here I am, during a glorious, cloudless summer with the ethereal Nordic light pluming through the dense pine forests and across the luminous lakes, as I take some time to be alone with my Swedish family. But even in paradise, surrounded by Swedish women, I have to say that I note a lot of falling short.

Women, as elsewhere in the world, have a longer working week than men. While it is true that men here do more housework than anywhere else in the world, they still do ten hours a week less than women do.

Swedish men are rather good at dealing with babies — men pushing a carriage are a common sight. Nevertheless, women devote twice as much time to child care. Few men take up the government's offer to pay them to take a year out while they look after the newborn. When it comes to laundry, even the most emancipated men fall short, spending a mere 20 minutes a week on this task.

Yes, historically there has been male-female tension in the air in Sweden. Strindberg has it in his plays "The Father" and "Miss Julie." Ingmar Bergman has spent a long and fruitful life chronicling every pain-filled tearing of the fabric of relationships across the great sexual divide. And now this year a feminist party has been launched, led by the former leader of the Communist Party and including such luminaries as the former STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION wife of Prime Minister Goran Persson. However, most of the women I know here have little truck with contemporary, fundamentalist feminism.

And young men too are getting worried. A firm majority of students studying for the familiar prestigious professions — legal, medical, veterinarian — are women. Women work harder and study harder. And since the way is now open, they are racing ahead. Only in business leadership, with its more conservative institutions, do women still seriously lag behind.

But the torments of Strindberg and Bergman have been outgrown. Over the last 50 years, Swedish women have won most of their battles but still retain their feminine charm.

About the Author
Jonathan Power is a commentator on foreign affairs.

13

The End of the End of History

John Gray

Through out modern times, liberal states have always co-existed alongside many kinds of tyranny. Similarly, the modern world has always contained numerous economic systems – many varieties of capitalism, planned and guided economies, and a host of hybrid economic systems not easily classified.

Diplomacy and international law developed to cope with the fact of diverse regimes. Yet throughout the 20th century global politics was shaped by the project of unifying the world within a single regime. Insofar as it remained committed to Marxist ideology, the long-term goal of the Soviet regime was world communism. The whole world was to be a single socialist economy, administered by forms of governance that were to be everywhere the same.

This Marxist project is now widely and rightly viewed as utopian. Even so, its disappearance as a force in world politics has not been accompanied by an acceptance of a diversity of political systems. With communism's fall we were, in Francis Fukuyama's famous phrase, at the 'end of history,' a time when western governments could dedicate themselves to unifying the international system into a single regime based on free markets and democratic government. But this project is as utopian as Marxism once was, and promises to be considerably more short-lived than the Soviet Union.

Many reasons exist for why the Soviet bloc collapsed, but – contrary to conventional opinion – economic inefficiencies were not central among

The End of the End of History, *John Gray,* IWM Newsletter 77, No.3. Summer 2002. http://www.geocities.com/postneoliberal_review/Gray1.htm
[C.ELDOC1.0602/DD1-2The-End-of-the-End-of-Hi

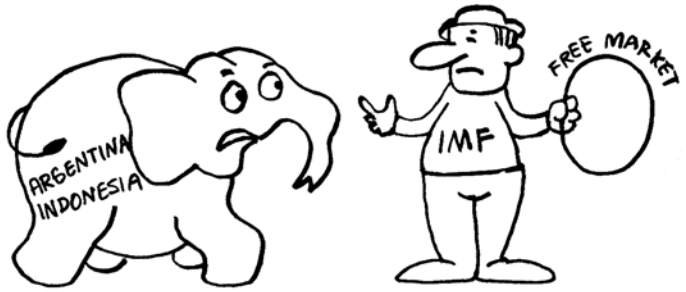
them. The Soviet Bloc disintegrated because it could not cope with nationalist dissent in Poland and the Baltic states and more generally because a single economic and political system could not meet the needs of vastly different societies and peoples. Marxism is a version of economic determinism. It predicts that differences between societies and peoples narrow as they achieve similar levels of economic development. Nationalism and religion have no enduring political importance, Marxists believed. In the short run, they can be used to fuel anti-imperialist movements. Ultimately, they are obstacles to the construction of socialism. Guided by these beliefs, the Soviet state waged an incessant war on the national and religious traditions of the peoples they governed.

In practice, Soviet rulers were compelled to compromise in order to remain in power. Few could be described as wholehearted ideologues. Even so, the Soviet system's rigidity was largely the result of the fact that it was established on a false premise.

The basis of the Soviet system was the Marxian interpretation of history in which every society is destined to adopt the same economic system and the same form of government. The USSR fell apart because its monolithic institutions could not accommodate

nations – Czechs and Uzbeks, Hungarians and Siberians, Poles and Mongols – whose histories, circumstances and aspirations were radically divergent. Today, the global free market constructed in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse is also falling apart – and for similar reasons. Like Marxists, neo-liberals are economic determinists. They believe that countries everywhere are destined to adopt the same economic system and therefore the same political institutions. Nothing can prevent the world from becoming one vast free market; but the inevitable process of convergence can be accelerated. Western governments and transnational institutions can act as midwives for the new world.

Implausible as it sounds, this ideology underlies institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Argentina and Indonesia have very different problems, but for the IMF the solution is the same: they must both become free-market economies. Russia at the time of communism's fall was a militarized rustbelt, but the IMF was convinced that it could be transformed into a western-style market economy. An idealized model of Anglo-Saxon capitalism was promoted everywhere. Unsurprisingly, this highly ideological approach to economic policy has not succeeded. Indonesia is in ruins, while Argentina is rapidly ceasing to be a first-world country. Russia has put the neo-liberal period behind it and is now developing on a path better suited to its history and circumstances.



Countries that have best weathered the economic storms of the past few years are those – like India, China and Japan which took the IMF model with a large grain of salt. To be sure, like the few remaining Marxists who defend central economic planning, the ideologues of the IMF claim that their policies did not fail; they were not fully implemented. But this response is disingenuous. In both cases, the policies were tried – and failed at great human cost.

If the global free market is unraveling, it is not because of the human costs of its policies in countries such as Argentina, Indonesia and Russia. It is because it no longer suits the countries that most actively promote it. Under the pressure of a stock market downturn, the US is abandoning policies of global free trade in favor of more traditional policies of protectionism. This turn of events is not surprising. Throughout its history, America has always tried to insulate its markets from foreign competition. So history has once more triumphed over ideology.

Neo-liberal dead-

With America's loss of interest, the chief prop of neo-liberal policies has been pulled away. Mainstream politicians may still nod reverently when the global free market is invoked, but in practice the world is reverting to an older and more durable model. It is being tacitly accepted that in the future, as in the past, the world will contain a variety of economic systems and regimes. The global free market is about to join communism in history's museum of discarded utopias.

About the Author

John Gray is Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics.

13

The Non-Profit & The Autonomous Grassroots

Eric Tang

Once upon a time, being labeled an affiliate of the state was a nasty indictment in radical movements. Today some of the movement's best and brightest openly and proudly claim membership in organizations whose link to the state—either through direct public funding or mere tax-reporting—are unambiguous and well-documented. I am speaking of the impressive number of radical-minded grassroots groups that, while continuing to sincerely abide by the ethos of "our movement," have assumed the form of a Non-Profit (NP) entity.

Non-profits, also known as non-governmental organizations (NGO), are often stripped down to their barest and most essential nature as a tax category. This official registration with the government grants the accreditation needed to receive government funding and funds through private philanthropic foundations. In exchange, the grassroots non-profit must adopt legally binding by-laws, elect a board of directors modeled after corporations, and open board minutes and fiscal accounting to the public. Previously considered anathema to the grassroots Left, these practices are accepted governing principles of many community organisations. While we have yet to precisely assess the effects of incorporating an autonomous movement, experience suggests the non-profit poses as many challenges to organizing as it solves.

Fractured Left

"We, the Left, have been described as being, weak, fractured, disorganized. I attribute that to three things — COINTELPRO. 501(c)3 Capitalism,"deadpans Suzanne Pharr at a conference, entitled

_____

The Non-Profit &The Autonomous Grassroots, *Eric Tang,* Left Turn Magazine. http://www.leftturn.org/Articles/Viewer.aspx?id=698&type=M#top [C.ELDOC1.0602/DD1-3non-profits10.html]

"The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex" in May 2004. Few grassroots organisers can claim a tour of duty more impressive than Suzanne Pharr, whose work traverses the past thirty years. She is an author, founding member and director of the Arkansas Women's Project for nineteen years, and former director of the Highlander Research and Education Center. During her days in Arkansas she participated in the internal struggles that eventually led her anti-domestic violence organisation to adopt the non-profit model.

After years of effectively organising a grassroots core, Pharr had reached an impasse. She struggled with the need to have a greater impact in the movement to end violence against women, which required working with the array of political forces outside the grassroots. Becoming a non-profit represented one major step in that direction,

facilitating the political goals of "credibility...the approval of churches, clubs, and even law enforcement." Yet, she debated if registering as a non-profit would deliver these goals or take them away. Time would tell. "I've seen the loss of political force and movement building," says Pharr, reflecting on the over-saturation of non-profit models within today's New Left struggles. The most troubling aspect of these losses, she says, is that they were not so much based on sharp difference on key political issues, but rather "the dreadful competition among organizations for little pots of money."

Years ago the Left made a decision to go down a certain road towards non-profit incorporation. There were some victories but also a good number of political casualties, according to those who took part in that turn. Yet open dialogue on the complex challenges posed by the non-profit has often taken a back seat to the immediate need of getting important work done. Resultantly, a new generation of leaders inherit the unresolved dilemmas.

Heavy legacies

New activists in community, labor, and justice struggles are soon made aware that they bear heavy burdens. They must carry forth movements that ended Jim Crow, created environmental justice, and inspired mass anti-war protests. The young organiser can take a course that covers Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers and learn that all union members, even the lowest paid, contributed regular membership dues. Chavez insisted, "this is the only way the workers will 'own' the organisation." Young activists will inevitably take a hard look at grassroots organising that lives on foundation grants, hires a development director to raise funds to free others to do the real work, and adopts management systems which are foreign, if not

alienating, to the values and skills-set of the grassroots base. Contradictions will be analysed:

Why do we apply for a police permit to protest the police?
Because if we break the law, our board is liable.

Why can't we lobby?
Because that would violate our 501(c)3 status and the conditions of our grant.

Why not just take the streets?
Because insurance doesn't cover it.

The non-profit is cast as the straw man against a multitude of political frustrations. With the severe limitations (shackles) placed on the Left today, defense against right-wing attack must be accompanied by the exorcising of 'untidy' internal contradictions.

Nonprofit blues

Indeed, the majority of organisational leaders I've sat down with over the past year and a half—whose work ranges from defeating the onset of neoliberal policies in public schools, to the ongoing struggle against police violence, to defending the rights of immigrant communities—have experienced, to varying degrees, an onset of the NP blues. They are concerned about the ways in which the priorities of philanthropy tamper with the organising work, or how NP governance makes impossible the principle of unity which calls for youth and working class people at the centre. Worse still is how hiring and promotion

policies have led to competition and individualism among the ranks.

Still, despite the seeming ubiquity of the dilemma, a broad and consistent public discussion is absent. Each finds his or her own way to manage the contradictions. In my conversations with participants who attended the “Revolution Will Not Be Funded,” many lefties talked of participating in the NP as a tactic on the “down low,” a temporary ride toward a more radical end. Yet candid discussions on just how long we ride this Trojan horse, or how far we’ve actually traveled, are few and far between. For those who have steadfastly refused to go NP, they too maintain silence for the most part.

Perhaps it would be beneficial to return to the historical moment in question. The origin point can be found at the dawn of the Reagan era, somewhere in the early to mid 1980s. This was the juncture at which significant strands of the New Left decided to turn down the NP road. What were the internal conditions that led to that turn? There are three interrelated factors that standout — the deconsolidation of the party-builders and the proliferation of New Social Movements, Baby-boomers with loot, and the question of legitimacy. What ensues is a very rough sketch of each.

New movements

Throughout much of the 1970s, there was a strong current within the New Left that sought to harness and consolidate the political energies of the late 1960s into the revolutionary party. The years 1965-1969 were those mercurial years, which saw the rise of numerous liberation struggles led by groups such as the Black Panther Party (and the ensuing “Panther

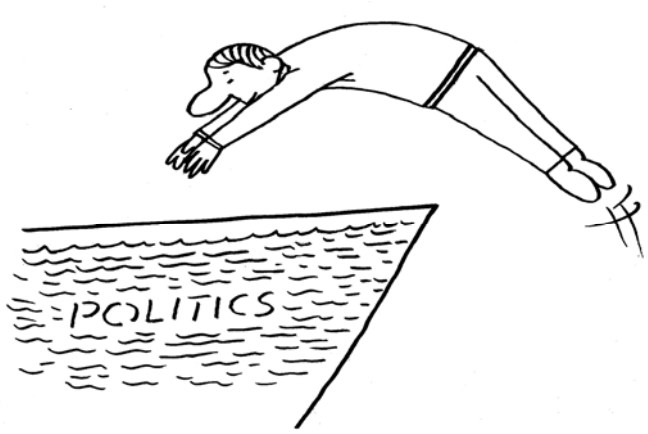
effect:" Young Lords, I Wor Kuen, Brown Berets), the Women's Liberation Movements (some led by white women, others by Third World sistas), Lesbian and Gay Liberation struggles and the meteoric rise of the anti-war movement. Max Elbaum describes the period as "Revolution in Air"—it was a feeling, a texture, of multiple resistances, each with its own brilliance and complexity.

By the 1970s many of the self-identified revolutionary forces within this New Left turned their attention to party building efforts aimed at consolidating the many movements in an effort to strike a unified revolutionary blow against the establishment. But for some, party-building came at the cost of extracting valuable time and attention from community-based struggles. For others, it meant erasing or subordinating the particular character of race, gender, sexual, and class oppression for the sake of a "higher degree" of unity. And for others still, party building would mark the beginning of deep sectarian fighting between different cadres, not to mention the abuses of power within parties and revolutionary organisations.

The troubled efforts of the party-builders paralleled the rise and proliferation of "New Social Movements" (NSMs)—led by those who had either departed from, resisted, or simply ignored the push to consolidate the revolutionary party. By the early 80s, with many party building efforts in decline, the NSMs continued to grow and proliferate, codifying their struggles under semi-new banners such as: Environmental Justice, Racial Justice, No Nukes, Housing Organising, Youth Development, Community Development and Anti-poverty. These would provide for the new social justice categories that would eventually be adapted by the philanthropic foundations.

Institutional power

During this same period, it got in the heads of some on the left that in order to have impact, the movement needed to take on the sharper image. It needed to get with the times (or the Times) and make an impression on institutional power as opposed to being its incessant pain in the ass. Instead of “mau-mauing” the suits for big promises that amounted mere bread crumbs, it was suggested that the left try donning a suit and grabbing a seat at the table to win big.



The new lefties who ran for political office during the 80s and 90s, deciding to work with instead of against the Democratic Party. For those with slightly smaller egos but no less ambition, the mission became to start influential non-profit organisations that could press for the incremental gains that would perhaps lead, finally, to those Marxian qualitative leaps.

Of course, there were those who pleaded in vain with their erstwhile comrades not to go the route of legitimacy—to hold out just a little longer. For many of them the story abruptly ends here. Their

generation simply “sold out,” as the crabby expression goes, forever abandoning the good idea of revolution. But sell-out talk—which is absolutist in both its form and intent—does little to guide us through our present-day dilemmas.

Alternative Spaces

The “whole sell-out theory crowds out the discussion of burn-out,” remarks Makani Themba-Nixon, director of the Washington D.C.-based Praxis Project, referring to those who were exhausted by the internal political processes and abuses of institutional authority in various revolutionary parties and collectives. Many people sought alternative spaces to carry out their work. According to Themba-Nixon, “women in particular needed a way to get away from the sexism, the exploitation, the rough stuff” found within revolutionary organisations. Internal problems were “more the issue behind people leaving than the external politics,” she says. The emergence of the non-profit, Pharr explains, provided the opportunity to continue to “do smart work, practical work, in a way that allowed you to survive. This was especially important after witnessing those who did not survive.”

Themba-Nixon’s observations would caution against sweeping calls for the New Left’s full retreat from non-profits. Autonomous movements are not inoculated from sharp power imbalances (typified by middle-class leadership), competitiveness, and internal exploitation. In fact, the New Left’s failure to implement and sustain anti-hierarchal principles, to care for the long-term development of all members, and to promote a diverse movement culture of participation led many to create non-profits as alternative spaces for effective organizing.

Civil society

These days, there's a small movement storm brewing in Atlanta, Georgia. In the summer of 2006, the city will play host to the first United States Social Forum (USSF), a gathering projected at 20,000 participants from a wide cross-section of the grassroots including labor, environmental justice, immigrant rights, racial justice, anti-war, youth and student, women, LGBT, international solidarity. Although the USSF will not take up resolving the NP dilemma as a stated objective or "thematic area" it may provide a space to shed some much-needed light on the matter.

The USSF is an official regional forum of the World Social Forum (WSF) which, for the past six years, has coalesced social movements from around the world to discuss an array of locally derived "global strategies" to defeat the agendas of world trade, war, and the new imperialism. The groups that comprise this new global movement are not political parties or government representatives of left-leaning nation states. Rather they consider themselves part of a new "civil society"—an array of locally based struggles and supporting NGOs.

NGOs and social

On January 1, 1994, the world caught a glimpse of this new civil society in action, as a relatively small band of indigenous Mayan freedom fighters from the Southwest state of Chiapas known as the Zapatistas led the once improbable people's uprising against globalization. The Zapatistas would advance the idea that those who were to defend the people in this "Fourth World War" were not the national liberation armies of old but rather a new Mexican civil society comprised of indigenous social movements completely independent of the public and private sectors.

This concept of civil society included non-indigenous Mexican civilian groups who saw their own futures inextricably linked to that of the indigenous

struggle against neoliberalism including NGOs. Under the auspices of Mexican civil society, the autonomous social movement and the institutionalized NGO strive for balance—each understands the specific and complementary role it plays in articulating the new social formation.

Complementary role

The NGO is not the subject of the social movement, but rather the political and technical support for the struggle. The NGO leverages funds to the autonomous grassroots groups, helps the movement build connection to those beyond the borders of the nation-state, provides training, education, and infrastructural support (the development of health clinics, schools, alternative media centers, etc.), and serves as a liaison between government officials and autonomous movements.

Yet, before we take heart that the new paradigm of civil society and its WSF provide a solution for our generation, it is worth noting that, here too, contradictions abound. The WSF has been criticized for its heavy presence of NGOs—most of whom can afford to send large delegations by plane—while the members of their nation's autonomous movements have less access, often arriving to the forum after weeks of traveling over rough terrain.
There are indeed NGOs throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa that have come under fire for at times tipping the balance, eclipsing the autonomous movements. Writer/activist Arundhati Roy, for example, has been a particularly harsh critic of NGOs operating in India, noting the ways in which they can often serve the neo-liberal "developing nation" agenda.

We must address the imbalance between autonomous movements and non-profits. This is an ontological question: can a non-profit give life to that which is a precondition of its own existence? The non-profit

can clear the path for revolution by dismantling its own policies and practices that prevent grassroots movements from truly impacting political institutions—from the electoral college, to the denial of proportional representation, to the collapse of the social welfare state, to the roll-back on civil rights.

No, the revolution will not be funded. We would need to find it first.

About The Author

Born, raised, and living in New York City, Eric Tang is a community organizer, teacher, and occasional scribe. Working in the Southeast Asian neighborhoods of the Bronx, he helped to found the first Asian-community-based youth organizing project in the New York City. He currently provides training and capacity building support to grassroots youth groups across the country.

NGOs and social

The New Economics of Ecological Capital

John Vidal

Here is a conundrum, courtesy of Merv Wilkinson, one of Canada's oldest and wisest foresters. In 1938, he bought a few hectares of forest on Vancouver Island which, he reckoned, contained about 100,000 board feet of timber. Once every 10 years, he would harvest about 20 per cent of it. So, he used to ask people who visited him, how much timber would he have left after 50 years?

Most thought he would have nothing left at all, whereupon Mr. Wilkinson would show them his trees and say he had 120,000 board feet. How was this possible? Because, he said, he selected very carefully the trees he would fell in order to maximise the growth of others; and because quite simply, trees grow. The result of what Mr. Wilkinson called his "ecological forestry" was that he and his family prospered and his trees grew greatly in girth, height and value. In short, it was truly sustainable forestry, and Mr. Wilkinson — now in his 90s — was ecologically wealthy.

The New Economics of Ecological Capital, *John Vidal,* The Hindu, Thursday, October 13, 2005. http://www.indianjungles.com/251005.htm [C.ELDOC1.0602/DD1-4ecologicalcapital6.html]

Far more sophisticated calculations of "natural capital" and "ecological wealth" are being undertaken around the world, but they all, roughly, point in the same direction as Mr. Wilkinson. Academics, environmentalists, and international bodies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), are accumulating an overwhelming body of evidence that makes the economic case for conservation over short-term exploitation.

Evidence of the real cost of environmental destruction is building. In the past few weeks, the European Union has said air pollution in Europe will cost up to $700 billion a year within 15 years if nothing is done; the World Bank has calculated that almost a fifth of the burden of all illnesses in developing countries is due to environmental factors, which are in turn preventing people getting out of poverty; and it looks likely that Hurricane Katrina wreaked so much damage on Louisiana because the natural defences of the Mississippi had been progressively eroded by development and neglect. Instead of bearing the brunt of the storm surge, the levees of New Orleans were breached, at a cost of about $200 billion — not far off what the war in Iraq has cost the United States.

This week, many of the world's leading environmental economists have been meeting in London. Their message is that unless "natural capital" is factored into national accounts, poverty in both rich and poor countries will increase. Countries that fell their old forests for quick bucks, that dynamite their reefs for fish, or that contaminate their waterways with farm and factory run-off may seem to be getting richer, says the UNEP, when, in reality, they are

sliding into poverty because they are plundering their "natural capital" — a key pillar of medium - and long-term wealth.

"Traditional economic measures such as GDP are shortchanging current and future generations," says Partha Dasgupta, a professor of economics at Cambridge University. "GDP does inform us of something — namely, the scale of economic activity. Unfortunately, in recent years it has been converted into a welfare index. My complaint isn't that GDP is meaningless, but that it has been put to wrong use." Prof. Dasgupta has studied the economies of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan and on the basis of their carbon emissions, timber and oil and natural gas, has found that every one of them has declined in wealth per capita since 1970. It is too early to tell with China, he says, but Africa, as a continent, has declined by 4.6 per cent. "They are crude, incomplete figures," he says, but he adds: "Poverty will only be made history when nature enters economic calculations in the same way that buildings, machines and roads do."

The new economics is turning up some extraordinary evidence. According to studies in the Peruvian Amazon by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in the U.S., for every 1 per cent increase in deforestation, there has been an eight per cent increase in the numbers of a particular malaria-carrying mosquito, which thrives in open, sunlit ponds and that runs wild once 30 per cent to 40 per cent of forest has been destroyed. Cutting trees down may have generated money, but so far no one has counted the cost of treating malaria or the value the forest has for stabilising the climate, acting as a sink for air pollution, preventing floods, providing wild foods or medicines — all services provided, traditionally, for free. The new economic argument is that if these "services" are not valued properly, they are liable to be abused.

New work also suggests that deforestation in Indonesia in the late 1990s cost about $9 billion; and the annual tourism value of coral reefs in Hawaii can be anything between $1 million and $10 million a year. Studies from Algeria, Italy, Portugal, Syria, and Tunisia suggest that intact forests are worth far more than felled ones. Meanwhile, an intact wetland in Canada has been found to be worth $6,000 a hectare, compared with $2,000 a hectare for one cleared for intensive agriculture. Intact tropical mangroves — coastal ecosystems that are nurseries for fish, natural pollution filters, and coastal defences — are found to be worth around $1,000 a hectare. Cleared for shrimp farms, the value falls to around $200 a hectare.

In the past, says Klaus Toepfer, director of the UNEP based in Nairobi, "the environment has been viewed as something like a Hermes silk tie or a Gucci handbag — a luxury only affordable when all other issues have been resolved. Investments in the restoration of ecosystems are not only cost effective but have a high rate of return. We are all facing poverty."

Restoration rewards

Mr. Toepfer, a former German Environment Minister, says it is worth investing money in ecological restoration. In Tanzania, more than 800 villages have planted more than 350,000 hectares of woodland in an area that was severely deforested. The Government and the World Conservation Union has just calculated that the cash benefits of the restoration are worth about $14 a person each month. The villagers now get thatch, wild foods, medicinal plants, timber, and fuel wood.

Eco-capital

The benefits of conserving nature are not just seen in poor countries. When the New York City Council had to supply safer drinking water for its 9 million customers, it looked at spending $6 billion on water

filtration. By managing riverbanks, forests, agriculture, and other ecosystems to reduce pollution, it had to spend $1 billion. According to the World Resources Institute in Washington, every dollar invested in combating land degradation and desertification can generate $3 in economic benefit in developing countries, whereas every dollar spent on delivering clean water and sanitation is likely to return $14.

Mr. Toepfer says: "There are encouraging examples of ecosystems being managed for the long term to create wealth for poor communities, but there is a huge job to do. Natural resources can be properly used to greatly reduce poverty. The time has come to reverse the course of worsening diseases, depleted natural resources, political instability, inequality, and the social corrosion of angry generations that have no means to rise out of poverty."

Paradigm Shift

Ranjit Hoskote

Prophets Facing Backward — Postmodernism, Science and Hindu Nationalism: Meera Nanda; Permanent Black, D-28, Oxford Apartments, 11 IP Extension, Delhi-110092. Rs. 695.

This book is a thoughtful and provocative examination of the stratum of thought and belief that underlies the intolerant hyper-nationalism of the Hindu Right. What distinguishes Meera Nanda's book, however, is her courageous and uncompromising demonstration, from a modernist and Leftist viewpoint, of the unfortunate ideological overlap that conjoins Hindutva with some elements of the postmodernist Left, especially in its eco-feminist form.

In doing so, Nanda delineates both what she terms the "reactionary modernism" of the Hindu Right, as well as the knee-jerk rejection of the supposedly colonialist and patriarchal premises of the enlightenment that has led many postmodernists to throw the babies of science and rationality out with the bathwater of European modernity.

Ideological overlap

A scrupulous scholar, the author does not make sweeping generalisations that could blur the differences between right-wing and left-wing post-colonialism.

She makes a specific distinction between the "cruder varieties of gender and Third Worldist essentialism in the writings of some postcolonial

_____

Paradigm Shift, *Ranjit Hoskote,* The Hindu, Tuesday, May 03, 2005.
http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/br/2005/05/03/stories/2005050300281600.htm [C.ELDOC. 0602/DD1-5review-Paradigm-shift.html]
theorists" and the more carefully nuanced constructions of subalternity,
marginality or resistance subjectivity as outcomes of specific confrontations between consciousness and circumstances, rather than hereditary or native identities.

That said, Nanda argues convincingly that the rampant relativism of the postmodernist — in which every society is seen to have its own rules of rationality, its own logic of historical progression and conception of truth — is not so different from the grounds that the proponents of Hindutva adduce in support of their own project.

Both the postmodernist and the Hindutva proponent dismiss the possibility of universal measures of judgment for truth, justice, compassion and advancement. Thus, relativism cloaks the most arbitrary, unreasonable and violent impositions in a postcolonial context; because the absence of any common point of reference allows the most belligerent discourse to lay down the rules, justifying them with the scripture of "de-colonisation".

Paradigm of modernity

This situation is complicated, as Nanda points out, because Hindutva's champions have always been obsessed with validating their absurdities by reference to modern science. Since science, with its rationality, method and verifiability, formed the key paradigm of modernity, the Hindu Right has felt obliged either to challenge or subsume it. Thus, Hindutva imagines modernity as an incorporated past

discovered afresh after centuries of enforced amnesia, while dismissing actual modernity as evidence of alienation, Westernisation or undesirable urbanisation.

It might be argued, of course, that such an attitude also grew out of the injured pride of a colonised people, who then claimed that all the fruits of modernity had been available to them in the dim past. Hence the frequently heard assertion that nuclear weapons, advanced mathematics and aerodynamic transport systems were known in Vedic times.

Such popular delusions were encouraged both by mystical nationalist movements like the Arya Samaj and by alternative religiosities like those of the syncretistic and utopian Theosophical Society. Nanda draws a line of descent connecting both the Hindu Right and the more unnuanced forms of environmental resistance and feminist rhetoric with the various identitarian, racist or authenticist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which arose out of the anxieties of runaway industrialisation, sprawling urban growth and the alienation of the self from the protocols of labour and governance.

Perils of 'retrievalism'

The book is a compelling account of the perils of what may be called retrievalism, the attempt to fabricate a new world on the basis of seemingly relevant elements from a lost time.

Nanda's meticulously textured study invites us to consider what the future of such alternative futures can be, when they rest on dangerously inflammable assumptions. Can feminism, predicated as it is on the autonomy of the female subject from the structure of restrictions built up over the centuries, usefully adapt forms and values from peasant histories of messianic resistance that, however emancipatory they may have been for men, were oppressive to women? Can ecological activists romanticise the subaltern past merely because it is subaltern, glorious in its naive pre-modernity?

The desire to retrieve the efficacies of "local knowledge" can lead to ambivalent results. It results in an excess of political correctness on the postmodernist Left, as when the virtues of specific ethnosciences are celebrated over the homogenising effects of modern science. It also permits the Right to elevate mantic practices to the level of academic disciplines, without bothering with empirical demonstration. At their extreme, some varieties of environmental and feminist activism become conflatable with some of Hindutva's social mobilisations.

Plea for critical sensibility

Hindutva/post modernism

The book is a passionately argued plea for the preservation of the critical sensibility. Such a sensibility must defend itself from the expected quarters, the Right, but also secure itself against (un)friendly fire from the Left. Through her exploration of Dr. Ambedkar's project of combining a socially oriented Buddhism with the optimistic pragmatism of Dewey, Nanda also draws attention to a crucial but overlooked path to an Indian modernity.

Ambedkar is often narrowly viewed as a Dalit messiah; in truth, his emancipatory vision embraced the totality of the Indian experience, and stands solidly as an alternative to the Gandhian, Nehruvian and Tagorean visions. Unfortunately, his vision has also been betrayed by Dalit activists who confine themselves to idealising Dalit "difference" as an end in itself, rather than as the beginning of a self-transformative process.

Nanda does not despair of science as a mode that articulates such a self-transformative process. She demonstrates the fatuity of treating European rationality and modern science as irredeemable instruments of repression in themselves, merely because they were institutionalised in the colonies by a repressive colonial regime. Surely a more reflective and constructive critique of their instrumentalisation is called for, rather than a dismissal tout court? Her book reminds us that such a dismissal would leave us at the mercy of the demons of repression, while denying us the liberal and liberating energies of a self-reflexive and non-dogmatic scientific approach.