Critique of Modernity: A Study in Tolstoy and Gandhi

Thesis submitted during 2015 to the University of Hyderabad in partial

Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PHILOSOPHY

by

Akulova Oxana Leonovna

Department of Philosophy

School of Humanities

University of Hyderabad

Hyderabad 500046

India

February 2015

DECLARATION

I, Akulova Oxana Leonovna, hereby declare that this thesis entitled ***Critique of Modernity: A Study in Tolstoy and Gandhi*** submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. S.G. Kulkarni is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Date:_____ Oxana Akulova _____

Place: Hyderabad 10HPPH04

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Critique of Modernity: A Study in Tolstoy and Gandhi** submitted by Ms. Akulova Oxana Leonovna Reg. No 10HPPH04 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Date:_____

Place: Hyderabad (Research Supervisor)

Head

Department of Philosophy

Dean

School of Humanities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all I express my sincere gratitude to Prof. S.G. Kulkarni, my supervisor for his meticulous guidance and encouragement. He has immensely helped me in conceptualizing the theme of the thesis, designing its structure and organizing its content.

I place on record my heartful thanks to **Indian Council of Cultural Relations** for the fellowship which enabled me to undertake this research.

I have no words to express my gratitude to **University of Hyderabad** for having extended all the infrastructural facilities in connection with my research.

My special thanks to Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor of University of Hyderabad for their financial assistance to enable me to carry out my work at the Leo Tolstoy Museum-Estate Yasnaya Polyana in Russia.

I had the privilege of access to the personal library of Leo Tolstoy in his estate Yasnaya Poliana, and also to benefit from long and interesting discussions on the life and work of Leo Tolstoy with research associates of the museum who constantly work at Yasnaya Poliana.

I thank the Department of philosophy and all the teachers: Prof. Prajit Basu, Prof. Amitabh Dasgupta, Dr. K.S. Prasad, Prof. Raghurama Raju, Sri Anand Wazalwar, Dr. Venusa Tinyi, Dr. Kavita Chauhan, Dr. Anand Sagar and Dr. Abhijeet Joshi for their being friendly and supportive whenever I needed their help and advice.

I was also given an opportunity to spend almost one week in the Institute of Gandhian Studies at Wardha. My special thanks to Sri Siby K.Joseph, Dean of

Studies and research of the Institute, for his valuable advice in selecting the relevant material.

I had one more precious opportunity to acquire a life-time experience in connection with Rail Yatra of Andhra Pradesh undertaken by **His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar** conducted in a good Gandhian tradition. It is with great pleasure that I thank the **Art of Living Foundation** for giving me the chance and opportunity to witness the practical application of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi about better India, to be a part of AOL programs for inculcating the human values and reviving ancient Indian tradition.

To my mom ...

Contents

Introduction

This thesis falls in the area of social and political philosophy which has become one of the frontal areas of philosophical research, thanks to its organic relation with not only ethics but also metaphysics (that is social and human ontology) and epistemology. This is not surprising because the recent developments in socio-political philosophy have reopened the various issues concerning the social world, human nature including its relation to the natural word, the nature of knowledge, belief and ideology and of course our responses to the issues right/wrong distinction.

One of the central themes of contemporary social and political philosophy is modernity. As Charles Taylor rightly says, 'from the beginning, the number one problem of modern social science has been modernity itself." (2004:1) However, he could have added humanities in this connection. Whether it is in the literary studies or historical studies or in philosophical studies modernity has emerged as a core theme. The very fact that the theme has commanded such a multifarious approaches speaks immensely of its intellectual richness. In fact, it is one of the prime themes of what today goes by multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary inquiry. The thematic significance mentioned above owes itself to the following reasons: firstly, modernity is primarily adoption not of certain gargets or technological innovations but of certain attitudes, beliefs, and commitments which together constitute what Charles Taylor calls a 'social imaginary' which is radically distinct from its pre-modern counterpart, and which makes intelligible our present day institutional practices and ways of living. Secondly, modernity has brought about a fundamental division between its protagonists and antagonists, not only at a global level and at the level of distinct social settings but also at the level of individual.

And this division centers around the question whether modernity as a mode of thinking is emancipatory or subjugative. Thirdly, as an intellectual tradition modernity has displayed self-criticism which has resulted in calling into question its fundamental tenets by those who are otherwise wedded to the modernist framework. It is this self-criticism which has given birth to heterogeneous ideas as constitutive of its body that makes modernity stand in contrast to the pre-modern ethos which might have been self-critical once but definitely not when modernity emerged in the 17th century Western Europe. Finally, there is a growing tendency in the non-western world to envision alternative modernity that is a conception of modernity which admits of plurality and which is an alternative to the one current in the Western world. The realization of such a vision presupposes an adequate understanding of original modernity that flourished and is flourishing in the west in spite of much criticisms and interrogations.

However, such an adequate understanding comes from two directions: 1) by a clear delineation of its broad framework of thought with its rich contours pertaining to the social reality, human nature, our relation to the world and our sense of right and wrong; 2) by an in-depth understanding of the critiques advanced by the various thinkers who distance themselves with various degrees of proximity. Some of the thinkers, who advanced critiques of modernity, stand within the framework of modernity thus advancing an internal/immanent critique. This is best exemplified by Kant. Some others provide external critiques of modernity by standing outside the horizons of modernity. The thinkers who opt to provide critiques of modernity by standing outside its chief coordinates and this provide an external/transcendental critique seek to take religion as the major plank of attack on modernity.

While dealing with the transcendental critique of modernity the thesis has opted for the religious critique of modernity as its central focus. However, the main denouement of this dissertation pertains to religious critique of modernity provided by Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi dealt with in Chapter IV,V and VI. Before coming to the main focus of the thesis, namely, the religious critique of modernity providing by Tolstoy and Gandhi the thesis seeks to clear the ground, in Chapter III, by dealing with the religious critique of modernity provided by their predecessors such as Johann Georg Hamann and Soren Keirkegard. This is preceded by a discussion, in Chapter II, of the modernist critique of religion provided by Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel and Marx. This in term is preceded by a detailed discussion of the broad contours of modernity in Chapter I.

A few words regarding each chapter of the dissertation are in order.

Chapter I begins by elaborating on the significance of modernity in this connection the points mentioned right in the beginning of this introduction. This is followed by providing kinds of modernity in order to point out that the main concern of the thesis is delimited to philosophical modernity. The rest of the chapter seeks to bring to surface the various aspects of modernity as a philosophical framework. In this connection the thesis takes up modernity's conceptions of nature, man, and man/nature relation and juxtaposes them with the pre-modern counterparts: the idea of nature as an object, man as a self-defined subject and rationality as an instrument of acquiring a mastery over nature to facilitate progress. This is followed by a discussion of the new epistemology which modernity as a philosophical phenomenon brought about. In this connection, the chapter highlights the foundationalist and representationalist dimensions of the new epistemology which sets it apart from the pre-modern epistemology. In addition to this, the chapter seeks to show how the new epistemology, whether of the

rationalist or the empiricist variety or a combination of them, sought to legitimize a new kind of knowledge and delegitimize the pre-modern systems of knowledge. Central to such a legitimation is to produce a spectrum at whose one end we have science and at another end is the realm of faith. Hence, the thesis seeks to identify the defining tenets of modern science which decisively separates from its pre-modern counterpart. Special mention has been made about the project of modern science to replace teleological explanations of all phenomena - physical, biological, social and psychological – by mechanistic ones – a tenet which is the logical consequence of the objectification of nature which is the first hallmark of modernity as a philosophical tradition. The chapter then proceeds to delineate the fundamental orientation of modern ethics. After pointing out the self-imposed limitations of modern ethics the chapter seeks to briefly deal with both the utilitarian and deontological ethical theories. Particularly in connection with the latter the chapter brings to surface how modern ethics, especially in its deontological version seeks to nullify the philosophical credibility of the pre-modern ethics which is condemned as involving heteronomy as against autonomy which is central to a genuine ethics. The chapter then takes up the fundamental concepts of the socio-political dimension of philosophical modernity. The discussion in this connection of individualism, liberalism, nationalism, democracy and secularism is brief but sufficient to highlight these ideas as providing, on the one hand, a libratory content of modernity, and, on the other hand, render modernity vulnerable to radical critiques. This chapter acquires a sense of completion by briefly focusing on the non-religious critiques of modernity as a prelude to the religious critique of modernity dealt with from chapter III onwards. In this connection, the chapter focuses its attention on the Expressivist challenge to modernity best articulated by Herder who sought to axe the core modernist ideas of nature as an object, man as a subject and hence distinct from nature, rationality as

the defining feature of man and the conception of relation of man with nature in terms of control. Herder undermined the received tradition of modern philosophy by putting forth a philosophical anthropology which recognized man as an expressive being rather than a rational one. And he related man with nature in terms of communion (rather than control) thereby rejecting the construal of nature and man in terms of object and subject. Marx's response to modernity is quite complex. On the one hand, he celebrates modernity as an ethos that corresponds to a civilization higher than feudalism, whose ideology was the pre-modern ethos. On the other hand, he refuses to recognize modernity as anything more than the ideology of capitalism which buttresses the most dehumanizing aspects of capitalism. In particular, Marx draws our attention to the most acute kind of alienation that capitalism embodies. On the one hand, modernity, in particular its liberative-looking, socio-political ideas that find expression in the institution of practices of the capitalist society, seduces us into overlooking all the exploitative and freedom denying economic system. On the other hand, these ideas produce an illusion that hides our conditions of alienation and function in the way religion functioned in the pre-modern society, namely, as an opium of the people. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of Hanna Arendt's critical response to modernity. According to her, by destroying all the ties that constituted an organic society, that is, by pushing primordial identities into the domain of the private, modern society produces free-floating atomic individuals who fail to share a larger scheme of life that provides them a sense of meaning and belonging. Such individuals produced *en mass* by the modern society prove to be a fertile ground for the emergence of authoritarian and even totalitarian regimes that give a spurious sense of meaning and belonging to those rootless individuals. Such regimes completely undermine democracy which is supposed to be the most

precious gift of modernity. Thus, modernity carries the seeds of its own destruction.

Chapter II considers the critical responses of some of the modern philosophers to religion with the aim of clearing the ground for the subsequent discussion of the critique of modernity advanced by religiously oriented thinkers. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of Descartes who was not anti-religious. Yet, he unintentionally weakened the case of religion by means of his doctrine of mind/body dualism, he thought he would salvage the religious doctrine of the soul whose immortality he sought to establish by his thesis of incorporiality of the soul. Such a conception of soul which was antithetical to both the Greek/Aristotelian conception of soul from which was derived the Christian conception of the soul was unsatisfactory to the religious thinkers themselves of his time on purely logical grounds. Added to this, his mechanistic conception of nature left virtually no room to God as conceptualized in the religious tradition of the West. The next philosopher we consider is David Hume who, unlike Descartes, had no intention to make room for a religious world-view. In fact, his dichotomous classification of judgments completely undermined the credibility of religious claims. Hume augmented his antireligious stance by demolishing all arguments seeking to establish the existence of God. And in particular he targeted the argument from design and the cosmological argument which were apples of eyes of religious people. In addition, he made miracles the butt of his attack. Finally, he sought to undermine the ethical credibility of religion by demonstrating how religion cannot and need not provide the basis for morality whose locus lie only in utility. The chapter then proceeds to discuss the complex and highly nuanced critique of religion provided by Kant. No doubt, Kant replaced utility-centered ethics of his modernist predecessor by his own duty-centered ethics. However, the moral law

which was the core of Kant's deontological theory has its locus in the rational nature of man rather than in a divine being or a religious scripture. In fact, according to Kant, a system of morality which has its locus in anything outside the rational nature of man is self-defeating because it is the negation of what is central to morality, namely, autonomy. An ethical code of conduct, utilitarian or religious, is guilty of heteronomy. Kant's central message is that morality does not need religion. Apart from disassociating morality from religion Kant undermines the cognitive dimension of religion by his distinction between knowledge and faith such that religious concepts and beliefs fall within the domain of the latter only. In the part of *The Critique of Pure Reason* titled 'Transcendental Dialectic' Kant attempts to demonstrate how our belief in entities like God, Immortality of the soul etc., are products of the transcendental illusion caused by (a) misapplication of categories to objects not given in experience and (b) spurious application of ideas to alleged objects of experience. No doubt, Kant was religiously disposed and his religious convictions were close to Pietism. But those pietistic convections were not even tangentially related to his overall philosophical framework which keeps religion at an arm's length. The chapter then proceeds to Hegel's treatment of religion. Hegel's philosophical scheme may not negate religion as such but religion is subjected to a critique in the sense of clearly delineating the limits within which religion has to function. Among the three highest embodiments of the Spirit, namely, art, religion and philosophy religion is subordinated to philosophy though it is superordinated to art. Hegel supplements the theoretical subordination of religion to philosophy to the practical subordination to the state. The chapter ends by looking at the critique of religion by Karl Marx. In the scheme of Marx's philosophical anthropology, human nature realizes its essence through its existence which is historical. Such a realization is effected by man's productive relation with nature. Man satisfies his animal needs in a manner that those needs are transformed

in to specifically human needs. Such a transformation is made possible by means of his capacities that he develops in and through his interaction with other human beings. Thus, man affirms his human nature by means of his needs and capacities. But such an affirmation is accompanied by its opposite, namely, negation. Marx calls this negation of human nature alienation which is not a spiritual condition as mystics, theologians and poets thought but a social condition brought about by private property, division of labor and commodity production. Marx traces our religious consciousness to this condition of alienation. Religion portrays alienation as a spiritual condition and hence masks its real nature. It provides, hence, a spurious solution to a genuine problem. Marx finds alienation to be culminating in capitalist system and hence it is not surprising that religion holds a sway even in capitalist system with all the progress in science and technology. What brings religion and capitalism close is the abstract idea of man common to both.

Chapter III aims at discussing religious critique of modernity provided by thinkers who lived prior to Tolstoy and Gandhi. The objective of the chapter is to facilitate a sharper understanding of the religious critique of modernity provided by Tolstoy and Gandhi by juxtaposing it with the religious critique of modernity provided by their predecessors. Chapter III has selected in this connection the views of Johann Georg Hamann and Soren Kierkegaard. Hamann's attack on the philosophy of Enlightenment is discursive and renders his perspective complex by invoking the concept of intuitive reason. What surprises one is extent to which he accepts some of the views of modernist thinkers even while interrogating modernity. For instance, he openly accepts Hume's epistemological scheme and in particular Hume's rejection of the modal concept of causality. After arguing for Hume's assertion that causality involves only constant conjunction and not necessary relation, Hamann uses Hume's rejection of necessitarian conception of causality

and reduction of 'necessity' to psychological habit as a fulcrum for debunking rationalist epistemology, whereas Hume related causal necessity to belief, Hamann relates the former to faith. However, unlike Hume, Hamann associates faith not with animality but with spirituality. The thesis then considers Hamann's rejection of central doctrine of modernity regarding: 1) the idea of reason as organically linked to logically connected structure of demonstrable laws, 2) universality of human nature, and 3) possibility of attaining common goals by means of reason. Finally, Hamann ably attacks the modernist dichotomies between subject and object, on one hand, and reason and faith, on the other. He also questions, against modernity, universality as a defining feature of knowledge. An interesting point about Hamann is in his rejection of epistemological tenets of modernity along with religious scholasticism. The chapter then proceeds to take up the views of Kierkegaard whose butt of attack was the concept of reason and central position it occupies in the modernist ethos. Hegel's dictum 'the rational is real and real is rational' was his main target since, according to Kierkegaard, modern age suffers from lack of passion. Dethroning of reason would make a way for such a theistic conception of self and the world that is too strong even for conventional Christianity and its scholastic tradition. So, against the main spirit of modernity Kierkegaard valorizes passion. He foregrounds issues of selfhood identity, existentional concerns and intensity of religious feelings – the feelings that modernity refused to recognize in its various conceptions of man. Central to Kierkegaard's anti-modernist theory of human self is his notion of becoming subjective and the idea of personhood as a synthesis of possibility and necessity. The 'self' Kierkegaard spoke of in connection with the concept of person neither empirical nor transcendental in the Kantian sense. On the positive side, the 'self' is not given but is to be achieved by a process whose first stage is despair which is unwillingness to live up to an expectation of selfhood. The experience of despair is

the most authentic state. All this goes against the very thirst of philosophical anthropology of modernity.

Chapter 4 is devoted to a detailed elaboration on Tolstoy's critique of modernity – a critique which results in defense of religion as a way of life which is lampooned or at least contained within certain limits by the main stream thought of modernity. Though Tolstoy's critique of modernity has its locus in his religious conviction, Tolstoy is not sympathetic to any and every kind of religion. In fact, he vouches against the institutionalized religion expressed most palpably in the form of the Church. He even goes to the extent of being soft on science in its friction with religion. Further, the institutionalized religion, of whatever form, is a negation of religion as such, since the former is the cause of disunity, the extreme cases of which one finds in religious wars. Tolstoy's ethical attack on institutionalized religion is inextricably related to his equation of religion with ethicality. Morality, for Tolstoy, is inherent to religion. Though using Kant's deontological theory of morality as an entry point Tolstoy, nevertheless, goes much beyond Kant's view on reason as a locus of the moral law. He introduces the idea of Love, on the one hand, and on the other, God, love for whom should animate our love for fellow beings since for Tolstoy "without Love towards God the concept of humanity is an empty concept." And the concept of Love in Tolstoy's reading should be understood in a religious sense.

After discussing his critique of modernity's rejection of religion, the chapter takes up his view on art that rejects the modernist idea of art for the art's sake. This is followed by a detailed study of Tolstoy's epistemological position, in particular his valorization of the cognitive credibility of ordinary people as against the prevailing cult of experts. Added to this, is his radical theory of truth which, according to him, is more to be found in faith than in knowledge – an assertion which goes directly

against the modernist conception of inseparability of knowledge and truth, on the one hand, and disconnect between faith and truth, on the other hand. In the opinion of this thesis, the core of Tolstoy's transcendental epistemology is the idea of the "epistemic affirmation" of the ordinary – an idea central to his critique of modern education and his alternative to it.

The chapter then proceeds to highlight his critique of modern political philosophy central to which are his attacks on the State and bureaucracy. His critique borders on anarchism. For Tolstoy, State is in its very essence an embodiment of violence, organized and legitimized. In his work *Slavery of Our Times* Tolstoy seeks to show how the modern state has legitimized a kind of slavery unprecedented in intensity and extensiveness and enabled by law. To quote Tolstoy: "The cause of poor condition of working people is slavery. The cause of slavery is laws. Laws are in turn based on organized violence. Therefore, the improvement of the condition of people is possible only if organized violence is obliterated. But organized violence is government." (1952:181; my translation)

The chapter ends with a consideration of Tolstoy's philosophy of history which in his scheme must replace the modernist view on history as a phenomenon amenable to a scientific study. In Tolstoy's philosophical scheme of history the knowledge of the laws that determine human history lie beyond the scope of human reason and hence all talk of free human agency is highly problematic. The idea that we human beings freely determine the historical processes in which we get involved produces in its turn another spurious idea, namely, the myth of heroes who alter the course of human history by their profound knowledge and unique capacities. Nevertheless, while rejecting the role of individuals in history, Tolstoy did not reject individual as such. Individual in history cannot change anything, he can only 'move in history', but the ultimate regeneration could come only from within. This

was the reason why Tolstoy rejected the concept of individual political liberty. He did not believe that civil rights can be guaranteed by some impersonal system of justice.

The penultimate chapter, that is chapter V, deals with Gandhi's position *vis-à-vis* modernity. There are various interpretations of Gandhi's relation to modernity. Some consider Gandhi's intellectual framework and socio-political practice to be entirely antagonistic to modernity while some go to the other extreme and claim that Gandhi facilitated the process by which modernity could take roots by making it palatable. In between is the view that Gandhi sought to domesticate modernity. Be it as it may, the chapter focuses on Gandhi's conception of nature, man and man-nature relation. Gandhi rejected the de-sacrilized conception of nature central to modernity and this rejection is best illustrated in his controversy with Tagore regarding earthquake in Bihar. For him, "Visitations like droughts, floods, earthquakes and the like, though they seem to have only physical origins, are, for me, somehow connected with man's morals." After discussion of Gandhi's world view the chapter proceeds to elaborate on Gandhi's ethics-centered epistemological standpoint which squares very well with his conception of nature-man relation. The striking point in Gandhi's epistemology is that he treats faith as an epistemic category which cannot be possible in modernist ethos, because for the latter faith has no place in cognitive realm. In Gandhi's reading faith is not mere faith, it is morally uplifting. This heralds the discussion of Gandhi's conception of truth which is one of the two centers of gravity of his whole philosophical framework, the other being non-violence. The fundamental difference between modernist notion of truth and Gandhi's conception of truth is that the former juxtaposes truth with falsity whereas Gandhi juxtaposes truth with untruth, and secondly, the modernist notion of truth is located in the notion of fact but this is not so with

Gandhi's. Further, the chapter shows how we can reconcile the fact that for Gandhi truth is primarily experiential (rather than propositional) with his fundamental recognition that truth is normative. Succinct discussion of Gandhi's ethics is sufficient to place it completely outside of any existing moral system because his ethics is exemplary-based, unlike principle-based ethics. This paved a way into fundamentals of his social theory in which individual occupies the central place. For Gandhi, as Ashish Nandy says, "politics was a means of real testing of the ethics appropriate to our times and was therefore crucial to one's moral life. Everyone did not have to be an active politician, but everyone, Gandhi felt, had to work within a framework in which politics had a special place." (1994:81) Politics in his hands became ethics made visible and palpable. What makes Gandhi's individual distinct from individual of individualism is that, for him, individual is not the locus of rights but duties. So, this chapter considers how Gandhi's view of state, society and individual radically depart from the dominant intellectual culture of his times. All through the discussion the chapter takes as its main focus the fact that the *leit motif* of Gandhi's philosophy is a kind of religious consciousness which is primarily his own creation. In identifying and elaborating on the central aspects of the Gandhian framework, the thesis refers to some of the controversies he entered into with the luminaries of his time. The richness of the texture of Gandhi's treatment of modernity and its civilization cannot be captured by his own characterization of it as only satanic. In fact Gandhi took certain categories from modern thought and filled them with certain content which modernity can neither legitimize nor even recognize.

The chapter VI which is the final chapter brings out more than commonalities between Tolstoy and Gandhi, the contrast between their religious critiques of modernity. In particular it focuses on the position and role of the political in their

thought and action. The claim of this final chapter is this: their critiques of modernity have many commonalities including and especially their religious orientation, yet, Tolstoy's critique of modernity ended up being apolitical whereas the political occupied central place in the practice of Gandhi's critique. And equally importantly, the very category of political gets transformed by being rooted in his conception of the ethical. It is this which makes Gandhi central to current intellectual traditions and movements that interrogate modernity, unlike Tolstoy the profoundness of whose literary and extra-literary works regarding modernity remained unquestioned though in practice somewhat tangential. This is important because such a contrast enables us to recognize the nature of their philosophies of religion.

I. Modernity: The Philosophical Contours

I.1. Thematic Preliminaries.

In his excellent work *Modern Social Imaginaries* Charles Taylor aptly points out right at the beginning that 'from the beginning, the number one problem of modern social science has been modernity itself." (2004:1) To this we can add that it is so even for modern humanities including and especially modern philosophy. He identifies modernity as a "historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms…, of new ways of living …, and of new forms of malaise." (*ibid*). Modernity is primarily an ideology that is a set of ideas, descriptive and normative, as well as the phenomenon constituted by certain institutional practices embodying those ideas. It emerged in the 17th century Western Europe and since then has been spreading all over the world sometimes wholeheartedly accepted and sometimes vehemently questioned and even violently rejected. What provides modernity enormous significance are the following reasons:

Firstly, to accept modernity is not simply to avail certain gadgets or even participate in certain public processes that characterize modern life. It is primarily to absorb and internalize a set of interconnected beliefs, standpoints, perspectives and commitments.

Secondly, modernity has been intellectually a rich tradition, thanks to the fact that it has been self-critical. Modern thinkers exhibit a plurality of responses to the issues they confront. It may be noted that the traditional or pre-modern ethos was also self-critical but that was definitely not so by the time modernity arrived such that the self-critical thinking by the pre-modern ethos has been erased from the collective memory of today, excepting students of history of ideas.

Thirdly, modernity has virtually divided the world into two camps: pro-modern and anti-modern. In fact, even individual societies, particularly of the non-Western world, are so divided. We can say that even every individual undergoes this rift, in the sense, the same individual experiences modernity as a liberating force and as an oppressive power.

Finally, there is a lot of thinking in the non-Western world, including and especially India, about alternative modernities such that these societies can work out their own conceptions of modernity. In doing so it is necessary to first understand what those alternative modernities are alternative to. This understanding involves the study of the intellectual achievements of the thinkers who shaped modernity in its broad contours as well as the responses of those thinkers who interrogated and critiqued modernity in different degrees and from different perspectives. This thesis is a small step in this direction.

As we all know, modernity is primarily as an intellectual framework constituted of certain ideas which at times and at places cohere with each other and at times and places conflict with each other. And together they constitute a large canvas that informs our understanding of nature, society, man, knowledge and life in general, individual and collective. Equally importantly it concerns certain institutions which shape our collective life and which get their meaning and sustenance from those ideas which are constitutive of modernity as an ideology. Modernity in this sense is distinct from modernization which is a societal process centered around factors like bureaucratization, urbanization, industrialization, large scale migration, ever expending market etc. It is also different from modernism which is a critical response to and a search for alternative to both modernity and modernization and is a movement especially in literature, painting, architecture etc.,.

One can speak of modernity in terms of the social, the political, the economic and the cultural. The social modernity pertains to the rise of the new framework of social relations brought about by disappearances of the old classes, the emergence of the new classes and the radical change of character in the case of classes which continued to exist. Political modernity concerns the new kind of power relations and the type of power exercised by agencies like State in modern society. Of course, political theories differ over the question whether the State altered its character with the transition from pre-modern to modern society or whether State itself is peculiarly a modern phenomenon. The role of the State is central to political modernity because the defining feature of modern polity is the absolute State which emerged as a result of the separation of earthly power from the spiritual power, that is, the Church. The consequent of secularization of the State completely altered the balance of power that existed in the pre-modern polity. Economic modernity is related to a new system of production, distribution and consumption grounded in industry-centered economy which displaced agriculture-centered economy. This dimension of modernity is so important that it is said "To modernize a society is first of all to industrialize it." Lastly, cultural modernity pertains to the cognitive practices that modern society weaves in order to understand itself and the world around it as well as the 'Other'. The cruciality of cultural modernity for the whole modernist project is borne out by the fact that a society aiming at absorbing modernity lays high premium on the cultural transformation. In that sense modernity at its core is a cultural phenomenon. Cultural modernity naturally incorporates philosophical modernity, scientific modernity, artistic/literary modernity, religious and even technological modernity. The focus of the rest of the discussion of this chapter is philosophical modernity by which we mean the world-view, epistemology, ethics, and socio-political ideas as propounded and expounded by those thinkers who delineated the broad contours

of modernity as a philosophical tradition. In so doing they provoked brilliant critiques of the focal points which lent a distinctive character to modernity as an intellectual tradition.

I.2. The World View of Modernity

Central to the world view of modernity is its idea of Nature, Man and Rationality the articulation of which marks it out from its pre-modern counterpart. This seminal point has been elaborated upon by Charles Taylor in his classic *Hegel* in most illuminating ways. As he points out, the pre-modern philosophical thought looked upon nature as primarily constituted by meanings or significances or values and not merely, or at least not primarily, by facts. Nature was thus a scheme of values and an order of meanings in terms of which the facts have to be understood. Nature was like a text and facts were like printed lines. To know what the text says is to grasp what lies behind those printed lines which are all too apparent. Similarly, to understand nature is to grasp the scheme of meaning and the order of values that lie behind the world of facts by way of contemplation. Man is a man only when and only to the extent he can contemplate on that meaningful order which nature embodied. In other words, man realizes his/her *human essence* by such contemplation. Thus, man's dependence on nature is *essential* and not merely accidental/contingent/external. This is because if nature looses the scheme of meanings we have nothing to contemplate upon and consequently we fail to realize our own human essence – a failure that obliterates the very distinction between human beings and the animals. Reason/rationality is man's unique capacity to engage in such acts of contemplation. Thus, the pre-modern world view has a coherence and lucidity that accounts for its longevity in the history of thought in

spite of this it was supplanted by the world-view that emerged in the 17th century heralding the birth of philosophical modernity.

In the framework of modern world-view nature is divested of all meaning and values. It is taken to be the totality of facts related to each other in terms of mathematically specifiable ways we call 'scientific laws'. It is this de-valuing of nature by reducing it to facts that resulted in treating nature as an object paving the way for what Weber called "disenchanted world". This is well brought out by Descartes representation of nature as a machine. The *object*ification of nature is the first hallmark of the radical shift in the world-view brought about by modern philosophy. This is supplemented by *subject*ification of man which consisted in portraying man as standing outside nature, the object. Nothing in nature is subject and only man is. Not only man with his subjectivity is unique, but also he owes this uniqueness of his, namely, subjectivity not to anything outside him, that is, nature or God but to something within himself, namely, his capacity to think. (cf Taylor, Charles, 1975:8) In Taylor's words man thus became not only a subject but a self- defined subject. Taylor draws our attention to a possible interpretation of Descartes' dictum "I think, therefore, I am" as meaning "my essence as a human being who is uniquely a subject is to be traced to my capacity to think". Thus, *object*ification of nature and *subject*ification of man are the defining hallmarks of the modern world-view. Never before in human history man - nature relation was construed in terms of subject-object one. To this we may add the drastic change brought about in the connotation of reason/rationality. Reason/rationality was construed as man's capacity to grasp the workings of nature by identifying the laws that govern the natural world so as to control nature. Thus, the pre-modern idea of the relation between man and nature in terms of contemplation gave way to the corresponding idea in terms of control. The idea of control of nature was central to

regulative idea of progress which modernity held out as a hope and promise such that the more a society is able to control nature the more it is deemed to have achieved progress.

Undoubtedly the modern world-view matches its pre-modern counterpart in clarity and coherence. However, such a neat and smooth mosaic of the world-view of modernity developed a crack thanks to Later Modernity which is given the honorific 'Enlightenment'. The rapture occurred in connection with the concept of man, that is, the status of man within the modernist philosophical framework. In the Early modernist framework, as we have seen, man was uniquely a subject and therefore could not be an object and hence he fell outside the ken of science which is paradigmatic inquiry into Nature, the object. This means man constitutes the limit for the very enterprise we call "science". But science as a cognitive endeavor had occupied such a central place in the project of modernity that it was difficult to draw the limits to its epistemic reach. Hence, man was also to be treated as open to a scientific understanding. Man, therefore, has to be treated as an object like anything in Nature. The idea of man as a pure subject – the idea central to early modernity - was contradicted by the idea of Man as an object. In other words, the question "Is Man a subject or an object?" received contradictory answers which are equally at home in the philosophical framework of modernity. It is to Kant's credit that he sought to reconcile the conflicting images of Man by claiming that man as a phenomenal being is an object and man as a noumenal being is a subject. However ingenious Kant's resolution of the contradiction may be, the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon remained ill at ease with main stream modernity.

I.3. Epistemology of Modernity

The epistemological theory that emerged with the rise of modern philosophy as integral to its body is organically linked to the world view of the latter briefly discussed above. The former is so central to the latter that modern philosophy is identified in terms of what is considered to be its epistemological turn though philosophers like Michael Dummet construe the turning point of modern philosophy in relation to philosophy of language. Be it as it may, it is undoubtedly the new orientation which epistemology acquired in the 17th century that constitutes the hallmark of philosophical modernity. The radical character of modern epistemology is evident in the conception of the knower/man and the known/nature in terms of subject and object. The pre-modern epistemology, which was mostly Aristotelian, did not involve such a construal. The new orientation delegitimized the pre-modern cultural products, particularly in the epistemic domain and legitimized their modern counterparts ensured by science which was called natural philosophy since the beginning of the modern period (and 'science/'scientia' was introduced in the common parlance by William Whewell in the second decade of the 19th century). To make this delegitimation -cum-legitimation process smooth and effective a new epistemological framework was worked out. The new epistemological theory construed knowledge in terms of the subject *representing* an object. The pre-modern epistemology neither spoke of the knowing subject nor known object nor knowledge as representation. It was knowledge as participation. Further, the representation had to be in terms of propositions and ideally or preferably mathematical ones. Secondly, the new epistemology was foundationalist ,that is, knowledge was taken to have been based on indubitable sub-structure on which the super-structure of our cognitive claims was taken to have been erected. The rationalists and the empiricists agreed upon

the foundationalist thesis though they differ about what those foundations were constituted by. For rationalists the foundations were self-evident truths about the innate ideas and their logical consequences, whereas for empiricists they were the ones given by nature via experience. Thirdly, epistemology in its modern phase became normativist far exceeding the normativist character of pre-modern epistemology both in degree and kind. Though, both rationalist and empiricist epistemology swore by the normative character of epistemology, it was Kant who expressed the noramtivist thrust in a manner which was unprecedented. Kantian epistemology not only sought to synthesize rationalism and empiricism but to give a new direction to epistemology by means of deepening the normativist thrust. He did so by replacing "What is the source of knowledge?" as the central question of epistemology by "What are the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of knowledge?" He thereby implied that epistemology before him was concerned with empirical/natural conditions of the possibility of knowledge whereas it should, in order to maintain its uniqueness and integrity as normative inquiry, must identify the transcendental conditions of the possibility of knowledge.

Thus, representationalism, foundationalism and normativism constitute the defining features of the epistemological framework of modern philosophy. However, even a brief account of the modern epistemological framework would be incomplete without a few words about modern science and the way modern science radically departed from its pre-modern counterpart. This is because modern epistemology considered modern science to be the paradigm of our cognitive endeavor whose legitimacy must be taken as axiomatic such that all other cognitive endeavors must seek to approximate to science. Secondly, science was taken to be an embodiment of rationality because it is through science that rationality expresses its own essence which consists in controlling nature by grasping the laws

that govern the natural phenomena. One of the ways in which modern science departed from its pre-modern counterpart concerns explanation of natural phenomena. As we have seen, the pre-modern world-view looked at nature as embodying a scheme of values or an order of meanings which facilitated the idea of natural phenomena as purpose-oriented and hence amenable only to teleological explanations. The teleological theory of explanation which was central to pre-modern science provided by Aristotle who replaced the mechanistic theory of explanation propounded by Democritus, the first atomist philosopher of the West. According to Democritus, natural phenomena must be explained in mechanistic terms rather than teleological ones, that is, in terms of laws that concern regularities rather than purposes. Modern science with its idea of nature as a machine adopted the project of replacing teleological explanations by mechanistic ones in all domains – physical, biological, social, and even mental. Galileo was the first to do so in physics and Darwin was the first to do so in biology by means of his concept of natural selection. Marx sought to do so in the social realm by seeking to unravel the laws that govern production, independent of the intentions and purposes involved in production. Behaviorism and some other schools of psychology aimed at mechanistic explanation of even the mental phenomena. It may be true that we have not been able till date to completely replace teleological explanations in social and psychological realms. However, the aim of displacing teleological explanations regarding any natural phenomenon remains the regulative ideal which has been substantially achieved, thus accounting for the centrality of science in the cultural matrix of modernity.

I.4. Ethics of Modernity

We now come to the third component of modern philosophy or philosophical modernity. This component concerns ethics. Ethics was one of the central concerns

of Greek thought and continue to be so even during the Medieval times where it acquired quite a lot of Christian orientation. Since its birth in Greek thought three questions had been central to ethics as a normative inquiry into the nature of human conduct: 1. "Why should I/we be moral?" that is, "What ought to be the reason for one to chose to be moral?" 2. "What is good?" that is, "What ought to be the thing which ought to be pursued as an end in itself?" and 3. "What is right?" that is, "What ought to be the standard which ought to be deployed to judge whether an action is morally right or not?" Both Plato and Aristotle worked out detailed answers to all these questions and their medieval followers developed and interpreted those answers in their own way. What is significant about modern ethics is that not all these questions were addressed or at least addressed seriously. Most of the modern ethicians did not answer at all the first question whereas Plato took this question seriously since he feared the prospect of morality itself losing ground in the face of the skeptics' attack. The skeptics contented that to be moral involves self-denial and, therefore, morality is a bitter pill that needs to be sweetened. But they claimed that morality could never be sweetened, and, therefore, concluded that there was no need to be moral. The answer of the Greek philosophers to this question might not have been foolproof but their seriousness in answering this question was beyond doubt. This is because they rightly feared the failure to answer this question makes our choice of morality unreflective.

However, modern ethicians hardly took a serious notice of this question. Kant simply dissolved this question as wrongheaded. For him, the question "Why should I be moral?" is same as the question "Why should I do my duty?" The latter question is contradictory in the sense it is like asking the question "Why is the round plate round?"

More significantly, modern ethicians hardly took any notice of the second question which concerns the good. This question was central to Greek ethics and its medieval counterpart precisely because it concerned good life, individual and collective. Acknowledging how Iris Murdoch effectively brings out the serious omission of modern moral philosophy in this connection in her *The Sovereignty of Good* Charles Taylor says "This moral philosophy has tended to focus on what is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of good life; and it has no conceptual place left for a notion of the good as the object of our love or allegiance… as the privileged focus of attention or will." (1989:3) This is in spite of the fact that, as Charles Taylor has convincingly shown, the most decisive and significant point of modern ethics is the valorization of ordinary life as morally edifying, that is, in Taylor's words 'the moral affirmation of the ordinary' which is what provides an egalitarian character to modern moral consciousness in the place of the pre-modern ethical thought which valorized intellectual, religious or warrior class as the seat of highest morality. But the question is, "Why is it that the question of good life took a back seat in the framework of the modern ethics?" The answer perhaps is that it is the commitment to individualism/liberalism. Liberalism maintains that every individual has an inalienable right to pursue whatever he or she thinks worth pursuing. So, it is wrong on the part of ethics to stipulate any specific goal as inherently valuable. It was in the fitness of things, that the modern ethicians decided to leave to the individuals what to pursue as inherently valuable. On the question "What is good in itself?" even Kant did not go beyond saying that it was good will.

Hence, the central question of modern moral philosophy became "What is right?" In its search for the absolute standard that ought to be employed in moral

evaluations modern moral philosophy hit upon utility as the standard. Hence, Utilitarism became the official ethical theory of modernity. Today its acceptance is even more wholehearted than before because utility can be quantified. No doubt, Kant sought to replace Utilitarian ethics by his Deontological ethics, that is, utility-centered ethics by duty-centered ethics. Yet, the question remains whether Kantian ethics could challenge the utilitarian orthodoxy or only remains a theoretical option, despite Kant's valiant attempt to prove that utilitarianism, like God fearing ethics, is guilty of heteronomy which is antithetical to autonomy, the soul of genuine ethics.

I.5. Socio-political Dimension of Modernity

We end our discussion of the philosophical contours of modernity by way of a few words on the central ideas of the socio-political dimension of modernity. Our discussion will be very brief and even sketchy because some of socio-political ideas of modernity will be taken up in subsequent chapters. As an exercise in curtain rising, a couple of words can be deemed to be sufficient. The first defining idea is that of individuals. This idea is important because it is primary instrument in differentiating the modern from the pre-modern. In an important sense the pre-modern societies did not have individuals. They had persons who did not consider themselves as individuals. For, if you ask them who they are, they will reply that they are sons or daughters or spouses of someone, belonging to a community, tribe or ethnic group in opposition to a modern person who answers the same question by saying that they are individuals first and foremost. This is clear from the way the institution of marriage has undergone a change. In the pre-modern societies marriage involved coming together of two clans or such collectivities whereas in the modern society marriage is the beginning of a formalized relation between two individuals. In terms of social theory individualism entails that it is individuals

who have ontological primacy whereas collectivities have a derivative status. This is one of the ways in which the social contract theory was understood. Individualism entails the second important idea of socio-political modernity, namely, liberalism. Liberalism is the thesis according to which every individual has an inalienable right to pursue whatever he or she thinks to be worth pursuing such that the community does not have any say on the kind of goal the individual might pursue, however morally unedifying the goal may be. Of course, there is one limit to such a choice. I can pursue whatever goal I prefer, provided I don't come in someone else's way of pursuing whatever he or she deems worth pursuing. Hence, the only constraint is the principal of enlightened self-interest.

It is obvious that liberalism presupposes individualism which is there for primary concept. However, individualism is organically linked to the third idea of socio-political modernity, namely, nationalism. Nationalism is peculiarly a modern concept because nation itself is a modern phenomenon. The pre-modern societies had kingdoms, empires etc but not nations. The centrality of nationalism in the public life of a modern society is evident from the way education is imparted as a socializing process. Unlike the pre-modern education which consists only of picking up basics of reading, writing and reckoning and locally relevant skills, necessary for local market economy, modern education, apart from imparting context free skills required for national or international markets, aims at ensuring that the idea of nation is internalized by the student who is the potential citizen by means of the study of history of the nation, civics etc. apart from celebrating national festivals. Modern society also encourages a feeling of co-national partiality. The question is, 'Why is nation so important?' It may be noted that in a society where individualism has taken deep roots all traditional bonds of religion, language, ethnicity, etc ., get banished from the public domain and are pushed into

the private domain; private/public distinction is, therefore, too crucial in the modern society – a distinction that is hardly visible in the pre-modern societies. Obviously, the challenge is to find a suitable alternative that can act as a glue that holds free-floating individuals together in the absence of traditional bonds. Such a glue is necessary for the state to pursue nation building or mobilize people for a war.

The next important concept is 'democracy'. Democracy is peculiarly a modern phenomenon. It may be true that certain pre-modern societies were democratic such as Greek city states but such democratic societies were rare and far between. More importantly they were not 'democratic' in the modern sense of the term. As Taylor and others have pointed out modern democracies are radically different from their pre-modern counterparts, if at all they existed in the sense the former are direct access societies whereas the latter are the mediate access societies. This means that in modern societies the relation between the citizens and the state is independent of whatever identities the citizens may otherwise have. In fact, citizenship is the only identity which has public legitimacy. This is in contrast with pre-modern societies where the relation between members of a society and the central power is mediated by the various collectivities to which the members belong.

We now come to the concept of 'secularism' which is most contentious one, because it concerns the fundamental difference between pro-modernists and anti-modernists. Secularism is a political theory, a social theory and a world-view. All the three versions of secularism are opposed in different degrees by those who are critical of or even antagonistic to modernity. As a political theory secularism advocates that the state must be *equi*-distant from the various religious denominations. In other words, a secular state is non-theocratic state. As a social

theory, secularism maintains that all institutions, particularly, those related to marriage, family, property – inheritance, have their origin in Secular time and not in Divine time. That is, they are not God-made but are man-made and hence liable to be changed by us. Secularism as a world-view follows from the idea of nature as an object – one of the fundamental theses of modern philosophy. According to the secular world view the sense of the world is within the world, that is, we should understand world in immanent terms and not in transcendental ones.

I.6. Non-religious Critiques of Modernity

The above discussion about the philosophical contours of modernity as an intellectual tradition that shaped the life in modern society, individual and collective, is adequate enough to clear the ground for focusing on the religious critique of modernity, that is, its critique from religious point of view through Tolstoy's and Gandhi's prisms which is the aim of this theses. However, there were and have been critiques of modernity from non-religious points of view. It is in the fitness of things to say couple of words about a few of them in order to highlight what is unique to religious critique of modernity.

Modernity as an intellectual tradition emerged in the 17th century but became crystallized, solidified and concretized in the 18th century. However, the 18th century also saw one of the significant intellectual trends that challenged modernity in a comprehensive way. That intellectual trend is known by the name 'Expressivism' lead by, among others, Herder. The movement is called 'Expressivism' because the central category of the intellectual framework of the proponents and exponents of this movement was 'Expression'. Deploying this category, the Expressivists put forth a concept of man which was directly in

contradiction with the modernist conception of man as subject who owed his uniqueness, that is subjectivity, to his capacity to think, that is, his rationality. The idea of man as a rational being was sought to be replaced by man as an expressive being. Man's essence consists in expressing himself in word, thought and action. It is through and in the process of expression that man constructs his self which is, therefore, not a substance but a process. It is by means of the communion with nature that man realizes himself as an expressive being. Two things of consequence follow from this: 1) since what man communicates with cannot be an object, nature is not an object and hence the relation between man and nature should not be understood in terms of subject and object; and 2) what mediates between man and nature is communion; it is neither contemplation as pre-modern thought maintained nor is it control as modern philosophy asserts. The Expressivists went even further in denouncing modernity. Modernity considered rationality as the highest faculty of man since it is by means of rationality construed as the capacity to understand nature's workings in order to control it so as to achieve progress. The Expressivists, instead of providing the concept of rationality a different content by going back to the pre-modern thinking so as to treat rationality as a capacity to contemplate on the order of meanings and scheme of values that nature was supposed to have been endowed with, took a radical stance by claiming that it was imagination, rather than rationality that was the highest faculty of man. Consequently, they rejected the modernist idea that science was the highest achievement of human creativity and gave that unique status to poetry.

It is very clear that the central plank of the Expressivists' attack on modernity was a new philosophical anthropology with which they sought to set at naught the philosophical anthropology that was propagated by the modernist orthodoxy.

Unfortunately, the Expressivist movement was driven underground and the Expressivist thought could not become part of the mainstream philosophy from which it radically departed. However, as Charles Taylor has labored hard to show convincingly that the echo of Expressivist thought can be heard even today whenever and wherever modernity is interrogated.

The next major critique of modernity came from Karl Marx who unlike the Expressivists was not a sworn enemy of modernity. In a sense, if not in every sense, he was a critique of modernity from inside. This is because he was one of the first to highlight the liberating aspects of modernity. Yet, he was firm that the so-called modernity was an ideological cloak of capitalism which drew serious limits to modernity as a liberating force. The individual which modernity swears by is an abstract individual of political economy and not the individual who can realize himself as a species-being and thus overcome alienation. Like religion did in the pre-modern society, capitalism seeks to hide this alienated condition by consumerism, on one hand, and the seductive ideology called 'modernity' which is a false consciousness that presents the present condition as the most natural and desirable one. In a sense Marx's critique of modernity, to the extent it is a critique, hinges upon a new philosophical anthropology as in the case of Expressivism. Of course, Marx's philosophical anthropology is radically different from that of the Expressivists in spite of the fact that Marx employs, especially in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, while outlining his conception of human nature, the locutions which might fit the Expressivist theory of man. Yet, Marx's critique of modernity can better be understood as social. This is because, according to Marx, the real promise of modernity can be realized only with a social transformation. For the emancipation of man is possible only when alienation is overcome - a possibility which has hardly any room in the capitalist system which,

in fact, survives by accentuating it. After all, alienation which is the core of Marx's concern is a social condition rather than a spiritual condition as he was the first to point out.

In the 20th century, one of the popular critiques of modernity is that of the philosopher Hannah Arendt whose critique is political. As a witness to some of the authoritarian regimes of the 20th century which flourished, ironically, in a world that boasted of democracy. Hannah Arendt was keen to identify the factors that promoted authoritarianism in a modern democracy – a task she undertook in her monumental work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. In other words, her attempt was to show how modern democracies nurture anti-democratic seeds in their womb. According to her, the modern society completely undoes all traditional bonds by pushing them into domain of the private and thus deprives them of legitimacy. These traditional bonds provided the members of the society a sense of belonging and helped them to identify themselves with a larger scheme of life. Modern democracies in order to make citizenship as the only identity by driving out all 'primordial' identities based on language, religion, ethnicity etc., delegitimized the traditional bonds. The result was a large number of people going around like free floating entities without a sense of belonging and thus intensely realizing the meaninglessness of their existence. They will be pliable instruments for an authoritarian persons/s who promises them a life of meaning by creating false enemies against whom they could fight as their life's mission. The authoritarian regimes are thus born and perpetuate themselves. The crowds of such free-floating individuals are so spiritually deprived that they do not even need to be brain-washed into accepting whatever the authoritarian establishments say. Even when those crowds engage in evil acts their evil nature is not the result of a protracted process of brainwashing that makes them see their acts justified in terms of

profound reasons. Rather, the modern society has rendered such an evil banal and this is the significance of Hannah Arendt's famous expression 'Banality of Evil' which she used as a subtitle of her work *Eichmann in Jerusalem* .

There may be many critiques of modernity till date. We have only chosen for a brief discussion a couple of them as illustrations. If Herder's critique is profound, Marx's critique is radical and Hannah Arendt's critique is poignant. However, all of them are non-religious in their orientation like many other critiques. But there is no dearth of religious critiques of modernity. In chapters IV and V which constitute the denouement of the thesis we take up for study the religious critiques of modernity propounded by two great visionaries. However, such a discussion has to be preceded by, on the one hand, the modernist critique of religion and, on the other, religious critique of modernity. The former is necessary for gaining a kind of juxtaposition to the thematic of Chapters IV and V that provide rival point of view - thus resulting in a sharper focus for two ends of the spectrum, namely, modernist critique of modernity and religious critique of modernity. The latter is necessary in order to bring out the distinguishing features of the religious critique of modernity provided by Tolstoy and Gandhi vis-à-vis the religious critiques of modernity put forth by some of their predecessors.

Chapter II. Modernist Critique of Religion

As we have seen the aim of this thesis is to dwell upon the critiques of modernity provided by Tolstoy and Gandhi. Since their critiques have strong basis in the conception of religion and religiosity it is in the fitness of things to discuss how modernity looks upon religion. In doing so we focus on the views of some of the modern philosophers in their relation to religion in general and Christian religion in particular with its Aristotelian roots.

The *leit motive* that lies behind this chapter is the point that the modernist thinkers responded to religion in a way that dethroned it from the citadel which it had occupied as the paradigmatic cognitive repository of timeless truth about man, society, cosmos and divinity or prune it so drastically as to render it too anemic to function the way it did before the rise of modernity. Thinkers wedded to modernity intended to establish the credibility, intellectual and moral, of the central tenets of modernity and the institutions associated with them. This was facilitated by providing a radical critique of the pre-modern. The organic relation between religion and the pre-modern is sufficiently strong, they were convinced, to transform a critique of religion into the critique of the pre-modern. This reminds us of the recent responses to modernity which have worked out a critique of the modern by way of a critique of science (and technology). Both the critiques of the pre-modern and the critiques of the modern understood what constituted the nucleus of the ethos of the societies they turned their critical searchlight on.

We will start our discussion with Descartes, the Father of Modern Philosophy. But before we do so, a couple of words regarding the general epistemic ethos which is organically linked to modernity are in order. As we know, both rationalism

fathered by Descartes, and empiricism whose most consistent champion was Hume sought to delegitimize in their own ways the pre-modern knowledge systems which were in more than one way religiously oriented. Conversely, they also sought to legitimize a new kind of knowledge called 'modern science' along with modern philosophy which constituted the theoretical background of the former. Hence, the centrality of religion to both the epistemological schools which in their own ways promoted modernity as an intellectual tradition. Of course, Descartes and Hume respond to religion in qualitatively different ways, in spite of their common mission of pushing the agenda of modernity. As we see below, Descartes' response to religion was, at least apparently and by way of his intention, positive unlike that Hume who left no stone unturned in debunking religion. Whatever be their approach, the ultimate consequence of their undertaking was to promote modernity by weakening religion both as an intellectual tradition and mode of relating ourselves to the world.

II.1. Descartes

It is common knowledge that objectification of nature and subjectification of man which are the two hallmarks of modernity have their roots in Descartes. It was Descartes who paved the way for the mechanization of natural world which he compared to a clock. Such a conception of nature helped Descartes to prepare the ground for replacement of teleologism by mechanicism as a theory of explanation. Such a view of nature is completely antithetical to the religious view of the natural world nurtured by Christianity. Descartes seeks to compensate for the loss of an enchanted world of nature by working out, in a novel way, a philosophical picture of the human soul. This section begins by seeking to show how Descartes weakens the religious doctrine of the soul by means of explicitly stated tenets which he ironically thought would strengthen that doctrine and also by maintaining a studied

silence on those aspects of the soul valorized by Christian religion. Before we do so, a few words about his mechanization of the world picture which directly went against the religious picture of the natural world are in order. This is important because the religious world view including that of Christian religion has a perspective on the natural world along with a perspective on human nature. And these perspectives are fused into a spiritual framework - the framework which defines the pre-modern ethos.

Descartes along with majority of his contemporaries considered pre-modern scholastic tradition of forms and qualities as non-explanatory. The forms and qualities of material world were given by God. They only labeled the things without explaining them. Above all, Descartes held that those qualities and forms were themselves in need of explanation. In order to explain natural phenomena Descartes sought to find the material and efficient causes thereof. He argued that these causes can be explained in mechanical terms, that is, size, shape and motions. Descartes did not reject the role of God in the creation of things but he gave to the laws of Nature an explanatory power to describe mechanically the process of evolution of the universe from its initial chaos given by God to the highly structured world we see today. He writes in the *Principles*: "There is no doubt that all the world was created with all its perfection from the very beginning … Nevertheless, to understand the nature of plants or of man, it is much better to consider how they can gradually develop from seeds, than to consider how they were created by God at the beginning of the Universe. …. We could explain their nature much better in this way than if we simply described them as they are now, or how we believe they were created." (quoted in Clarke, Desmond M. 1992:268) It may be noted that Descartes was ready to acknowledge that our hypotheses may be inadequate in relation to reality and may even be false. But that in no way

reduces their explanatory power. Descartes' separation of truth value of hypotheses from their explanatory power is significant because by doing so he distanced himself from the pre-modern intellectual tradition which did not accept such a separation. The pre-modernist assertion of an isomorphism between truth value and explanatory power had a theological basis. But it is significant to note that Descartes too had theological reasons for believing that "his evolutionary account of the development of natural phenomena was false; he also claimed that, despite being false, it was explanatory." (ibid) Theological reasons apart, as Clarke points out, for Descartes' accepting hypotheses which were possibly false, another reason was Descartes' "pessimism about the feasibility of identifying and accurately measuring relevant variables on the micro level." (ibid 268-269) In other words, for Descartes science must search for explanations which were plausible, true or not. The kind of explanations Descartes legislates for the new science involve constructing mechanical models. Hence, central to Descartes' philosophy of science which follows as a shadow his view of nature are: a) mechanical models, and, b) hypotheses. The former concept sets at naught the theological theory of explanation and the latter concept is integral to his theory of scientific method which was called 'hypothesisism', according to which. science from now on aimed at procuring a kind of knowledge characterized by novelty and depth. Hypotheses which speak of unobservable entities in terms of which we explain what we observe are germane to the task of building mechanical models whose fit with reality is irrelevant to their didactic utility. Hypothesisism was subsequently challenged by Descartes' Empiricist opponents whose Inductivist theory of scientific method delegitimized any talk of unobservable entities and, therefore, of hypotheses.

With the above background pertaining to Descartes' mechanistic view of nature and the kind of scientific practice which followed from it we may look at his perspective on religion. To be sure, Descartes did not attack religion but sought to free it from scholastic tradition. He brought about an absolute distinction between mind and body. Though he did not change his view of incorporeality of mind completely, he looked at it from different perspectives with the same core. In earlier work he declared that mind was purely spiritual and had little to do with body like "blood is distinct from bone, or the hand from the eye." (quoted in Cottingham, John, 1992: 236) In *Meditation,* his main work, Descartes draws a fundamental distinction between mind and body. The thinking thing that is 'me' is "really distinct from the body and can exist without it". (quoted in *ibid* 1992: 236)

Descartes' mind-body dualism enabled him to bring about a radical break with not only the traditional/pre-modern philosophy shaped by Aristotle's ideas but also the traditional/pre-modern conception of religion shaped by Christianity partly inspired by Aristotle. Since we are concerned with the modernist critique of religion we limit our focus on the latter. However, we do touch upon the former wherever it has a bearing on the latter.

Before we come to this topic, it may be made clear that Descartes did not attack religion openly. In fact, he was quite positive about the central Christian beliefs which he sought to fortify from possible attacks of atheism and materialism which he anticipated with concern to be resulting from radical thought generated by modernity. It is in this connection that he worked out an immaterialist theory of mind. However, paradoxically, by his very effort to strengthen religion he weakened it, thus facilitating the modernist critique of religion. According to him, as we shall see, immateriality of mind/soul facilitates immortality of the soul which constituted the central doctrine of the prevailing religion.

Our discussion of Descartes‘ notion of immortal soul can be better facilitated if we begin with basic ideas of Aristotle’s theory of mind and its relation to body which was by and large accepted and developed by the scholastic tradition of the Christian thought. According to Aristotle, there is an integral relation between soul and body. The relation between soul and body is akin to the one between form and matter as figured out by Aristotle. That is, the bodily functions such as locomotion, digestion etc., depend on the relevant parts of the body in*form*ed in a certain fashion. Such a view resulted in a picture of the life-world central to which is the continuity between living things. Living plants, animals and men are ensouled and find their place in a continuum “where matter is progressively organized in a hierarchy, with each function higher up the chain presupposing those functions which operate on a lower level.” (*ibid*: 239) Descartes’ mechanistic view of nature completely set at naught such core ideas of Aristotle. One of the central tenets of mechanistic view is that nature is constituted by only one kind of entities and such a homogenous view does not admit anything like hierarchy as against the pre-Cartesian view which entertained the notion of hierarchically arranged heterogeneous entities, whether in the physical domain or the organic one. In that sense the pre-Cartesian view of nature was one of *multi*verse, unlike its successor which is one of *uni*verse. Hence Descartes’ assertion “The matter existing in the entire universe is one and the same” (quoted in *ibid*). According to him, it is wrong to suppose that bodily death is somehow caused by the absence of the soul. The death of the body is exactly like the breaking down of a machine. Descartes’ mechanistic view of the biological world and his thesis that mind is immaterial, together, he thought, imply that bodily death is irrelevant to the question of personal immortality; that is, while the body can easily perish the mind is inherently immortal.

Though the above inference of Descartes is not foolproof, he was convinced that the mechanistic view of his natural philosophy could be reconciled with the core of Christian faith, namely, that the soul is immortal. In fact, he thought that the core Christian belief regarding the immortality of the soul was provided with a better metaphysical footing than the scholastic tradition. To be fair, Descartes was right, at least to an extent. As Cottingham points out, "The scholastics were faced with a *prima facie* problem about the immortality of the soul. If the Aristotelian 'hylemorphic' ('materio-formal') account of *psyche* is adhered to , then it is not easy to see how a given psychic function, such as thought, can possibly survive in the absence of immaterial substrate…. Faced with this difficulty many theologians were tempted to assert that personal immortality was a doctrine that could not be defended by human reason, but had to be based on faith alone. Against this background, Descartes … saw his own philosophy as breaking new ground."(*ibid*: 240) In short, Descartes' position that immateriality of the soul which was not established in the Christian tradition entails immortality of the soul which was very dear to the official Christianity assured him that he was fulfilling the edict of the Lateran council regarding the Christian philosophers' deployment of human reason to establish the truth of Christian doctrines in general and the doctrine of immortality of the soul in particular. Yet, Descartes could not provide watertight proof of immortality of the soul on the basis of body/mind duality. For, the question arises, "If both of them were created by God then why mind cannot be corrupted as body does?" In his letter to Elizabeth dated 3 November 1645 he writes: "je confesse que, par la seule raison naturelle nous pouvons bien faire beaucoup de conjectures, et avoir de belle esperances, mais non point aucune assurance." (quoted in 1992:254) ("I confess that with the help of simple natural reason we may well make a lot of conjectures and have great expectations but we cannot have any assurance.") (my translation)

After highlighting some of the salient tenets of Descartes' theory of mind in relation to his religious inclination we may mention another point regarding his theory of soul that conflicts with the religious tradition. Cottingham draws our attention to Descartes' central contention that it is only intellection and volition, and not sensation or imagination, are part of our essence as thinking things since the latter are for Descartes only special modes of consciousness traceable to soul's union with the body. Cottingham rightly points out that Descartes, unlike his rationalist successors, missed to note that his view implies that "after bodily death, when the soul is disunited, its cognition will be devoid of particularity. When sensible ideas and images fade, the soul will be left to contemplate merely abstract and general ideas such as those of mathematics. And this in turn makes it hard to see how any real personality or individuality could be preserved." (*ibid*: 241) This point has a direct bearing on Descartes' relation to religious thought which he wanted to espouse. After all, any religious tradition, Christian or otherwise, which shaped the pre-modern ethos, has in its core the notion of soul as invested with some kind of concreteness or physicality/materiality of some kind which constitutes the principle of individuation. A completely immaterial soul has no placing in religious thought or life and is considered by religious thinkers a product of philosophical abstraction. The de-individualized soul of the philosophers best theorized by Descartes is incapable of involving itself in anything like spiritual progress towards godliness just as the God of philosophers, unlike that of religions, is incapable of arousing feeling of devotion or piety.

The above discussion was aimed at showing how Descartes in the very process of providing stronger foundation for religion in fact weakened whatever it had. In doing so he unintentionally strengthened the anti-religious agenda of modernity to promote which he provided enough ideas that cleared the ground for the successors

to weaken religion further. We now go to the next thinker, David Hume, the most consistent empiricist, who did not suffer from that gap between intention and the consequence of his undertaking regarding religion and modernity.

II.2 David Hume

During the Enlightenment, there were two pillars of traditional Christian belief: natural and revealed religion. *Natural religion* is derived from existing evidence and human reasoning irrespective of any information conveyed in revelatory sources like Bible and Koran. It is the knowledge of God drawn from nature through the use of logic and reason, which is based on proofs of logic concerning the existence and nature of God, such as the causal and design arguments for God's existence. *Revealed religion* deals with knowledge of God which is contained in revelation, like Bible. Hume attacks both natural and revealed religious beliefs in his various writings.

Within natural religion there have always been two types of arguments: design argument which Hume calls *a posteriori* argument and cosmological argument or *a priori* argument. Design argument is "that God exists because his creative intelligence can be observed in the order or purposiveness to be found in the natural world." (quoted in Gaskin, J.C.A., 'Hume on religion', *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, 1993 : 314) The cosmological argument in Hume's words begins "Whatever exists must have a cause or reason of its existence" and concludes with the claim "we must, therefore, have recourse to a necessarily existing Being, who carries the Reason of his existence in himself, and who cannot be supposed not to exist without an express contradiction." (*ibid*:314-315)

There are two views which form the roots of both natural and revelatory religions - deism and theism respectively. Deism states that our trustworthy knowledge of God is based upon reason alone. This term is also used in the connection with a belief that God only created this world and left it without his guidance. Such a view stays in opposition to the belief that God is not only the one who created this world but also who continuously sustains it and works within his creation.

The great concern to Hume and other 18th century philosophers were two flaws of religion: superstition and enthusiasm. The source of superstition is "weakness, fear, melancholy together with ignorance" and it manifests itself in "ceremonies, observances, mortifications, sacrifices" directed to unknown agent. Enthusiasm is religion corrupted by emotional fanaticism or religious mania: "raptures, transports, and surprising flights of fancy" that are 'attributed to the immediate inspiration of that Divine Being, who is the object of devotion". (*ibid*:315-316) Enthusiasm was referred to by the 18th century thinkers as 'blind belief' or 'the submission of reason to faith'. In the 19th century this position was known as fideism. According to fideism, faith is the only ground for any religious belief and has nothing to do with reasons or evidence, because all knowledge rests upon premises accepted by faith.

In *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Hume explores whether religious belief can be rational. Because Hume is an empiricist (i.e. someone who thinks that all knowledge comes through experience), he thinks that a belief is rational only if it is sufficiently supported by experiential evidence. This indicates the direction of his attack on religion, both natural and revelatory.

The argument from design is supposed to be the best case that can be made for the claim that religious beliefs can be rational. By showing that the argument from

design fails, Hume hopes to prove that religious beliefs cannot possibly be based on reason. The argument from design is an argument by analogy, drawn between the universe and a machine. But this argument does not work even in this scheme. First, the analogy between machines and the universe is weak at best, and as such any reasoning based on this analogy must also be weak. Second, the universe and a machine are not strictly analogous phenomena because they are not independently existing entities, rather the universe is a whole and a machine is a part of it. This objection is developed almost throughout the *Dialogues*.

One more objection against this argument is set forth by Philo when he puts forth an argument that the claim that God is an intelligent designer does not even succeed in explaining why the world is ordered. He says that it is equally difficult to explain both how God's thoughts set the world in order and how the material world may have its own source of order. In either case we have to ask how and why this happens. Nothing is gained, therefore, by positing God as an intelligent designer.

Further, in part V, Philo brings up one more argument that the argument from design does not give us clarity on the questions we want the answers to, even if we can infer some sort knowledge from it. The evidence we have from nature gives us no grounds on which we can infer that God is infinite, that God is perfect, that there is only one God, or even that God lacks a physical body. Therefore, even if admitted that the argument from design were valid, we possess no evidence from the nature of the universe to provide us with knowledge about God's nature.

Apart from these objections, design argument makes two questionable assumptions: (a) that the order in nature needs an explanation and (b) that no explanation is possible other than by reference to some designing intelligence. To

(a) Hume objects that as we do not make an attempt to explain our own ideas which constitute some sort of an order, why can we not apply the same to the matter. The further reason to think that the order in the universe does not need special explanation is that the order in the universe is such a trivial thing because without order universe would not have existed. The order is such a logical feature of the universe that we should not ask the question why there is an order. He answers this to the assumption made by proponents of design argument that order is less probable than disorder and hence needs explanation. But there is no ground to suppose so, since you cannot compare the probabilities of one *vis-à-vis* the other. Order is what we have got, and there is nothing else by contrast with which that order is in any sense probable or improbable. In other words, the proposition that there is order in the world is too trivially true to be the basis of substantial claims about God. These are the objections against assumption (a), namely, that the order in nature needs an explanation. The second assumption collapses by itself when the first is objected to.

Hume's essay *Of Miracles* is his first sustained attack on revealed religion. The particular revelation of Christianity as set out in the New Testament was supposed to carry with it certain guarantees of its own authenticity. These guarantees were that the revelation fulfilled prophecy and was attended with miracles. Miracles could only be brought about by God, therefore, a rational man had grounds for accepting the Christian revelation as genuine.

The first of this two-part essay contains the argument for which Hume is most famous: uniform experience of natural law outweighs the testimony of any alleged miracle. He writes: "It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony [regarding miracles]; and it is the same experience, which assures us of

the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but subtract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other, with that assurance which arises from the remainder. But according to the principle here explained, this subtraction, with regard to all popular religions, amounts to an entire annihilation." [*Enquiry*, 10.1]. http://www.iep.utm.edu/hume/#SH6a Thus, however strong is the testimony in favor of a given miracle, it cannot overweight the evidence of laws of nature. And, therefore, the wise person must reject the weaker evidence concerning the alleged miracle.

To demolish completely the credibility of most miracle testimonies, Hume puts forth four factors against them: "(1) witnesses of miracles typically lack integrity; (2) we are naturally inclined to enjoy sensational stories, and this has us uncritically perpetuate miracle accounts; (3) miracle testimonies occur most often in less civilized countries; and (4) miracles support rival religious systems and thus discredit each other" (*ibid*). Even if we come across a miracle testimony which is not included in these four factors, we should still not believe it since it would be contrary to our consistent experience of laws of nature. The conclusion of his essay sets at naught the Christian belief in biblical miracles:

"Upon the whole, we may conclude, that the *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity. And whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience" [*Enquiry*, 10.2].

This comment suggests a fideist approach to religious belief similar to that of Pascal, namely, reason is incapable of establishing religious belief, and God must perform a miracle in our lives to make us open to belief through faith. However, according to John Briggs, Hume's the eighteenth-century critic, Hume's real point is that belief in Christianity requires "miraculous stupidity" (quoted in *The Nature of Religious Zeal*, 1775).

Book 3 of the *Treatise* and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) are Hume's ingenious inquiry into the nature of morals. In the beginning the *Treatise* he tells us what moral approval is *not*: it is not a rational judgment about conceptual relations. Further, Hume says that moral assessments are not judgments about empirical facts. If you examine any immoral action in all lights you will not find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you can call *vice*. You will not find any such fact, but only your own feelings of disapproval. In other words, Hume states that we cannot derive statements of obligation from statements of fact. An important point Hume brings out after studying various moral theories, "I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought* or an *ought not*" (*Treatise*, 3.1.1.26). That is, he argues that this move from *is* to *ought* is illegitimate and that is why people erroneously believe that morality is grounded in rational judgments. According to Hume, morality can stand on its own. In this connection he rejects the traditional view that religion supports morality or even that morality springs from religion. In the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Hume makes groundbreaking statements concerning the relation of morality and religion which made a considerable contribution to analytic moral philosophy. "The first is that the precepts of morality and our practical obligations to observe them are independent of religious beliefs and religious sanctions. The

second is that when religion does intrude into morality, it serves only to distort natural morality by the introduction of 'frivolous species of merit' and the creation of artificial crimes". (Gaskin, J.C.A, 1993:333) Thus, for Hume morality is independent of religion.

What then makes people consider one act morally good and the other morally bad? "Since human beings have to a certain extent a common nature", states Hume, "what is misery to one, is misery to most; and what produces happiness in one, produces misery in most... This generality of approval for whatever promotes happiness in human society is, according to Hume, the ultimate source of moral discriminations." (*ibid*) This showing brings Hume to the conclusion that the sources of moral rules are located in the good of society and its members and not in man's relation to God or any spiritual entity. The commandments of God are so obviously true and codify the conduct generally needed for happy life of a society that there was no need to impose that importance on the surprising information conveyed by God on the Mount Sinai. On the question what then is the source of moral obligation, if not religion that enforce these commandments upon ourselves, Hume answers that "the moral obligation holds proportion with the usefulness" (*ibid*:334) Thus, in pre-modern times there was no genuine morality for it was heteronymous in that God dictated people what to do. In this connection Hume characterizes the usefulness-oriented obligation as "our interested obligation". "It is 'interested' because it is a combination of all the factors which press upon us, as mentally normal people in our normal social relations. These factors include our self-interest in doing to others what we would wish others to do to us; our natural interchange of sympathy; our desire to be well thought of by our neighbours; our wish to live at ease with ourselves when 'inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct' (*ibid*:334) is a part of what is

required to be a happy person." (*ibid*) These factors which add weight to moral obligation constitute something naturally felt, feelings that unlike thoughts or facts in Hume's estimation constitute direct sources of action. In Hume's scheme passion, that is, normal desire to live happy life, is the mainspring of action.

Hume concludes that there are four irreducible categories of qualities that exhaustively constitute moral virtue: (1) qualities useful to others, which include benevolence, meekness, charity, justice, fidelity and veracity; (2) qualities useful to oneself, which include industry, perseverance, and patience; (3) qualities immediately agreeable to others, which include wit, eloquence and cleanliness; and (4) qualities immediately agreeable to oneself, which include good humor, self-esteem and pride. For Hume, most morally significant qualities and actions seem to fall into more than one of these categories. When Hume spoke about the consequence of an agent's action as "useful", he often used the word "utility" as a synonym. This is particularly so in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* where the term "utility" appears over 50 times. Moral theorists after Hume thus depicted his moral theory as the "theory of utility"—namely, that morality involves assessing the pleasing and painful consequences of actions on the receiver. It is this concept and terminology that inspired classic utilitarian philosophers, such as Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832).

To conclude, it should be noted that Hume not only separates religion and morality: in his attack on religion he goes even further by saying that "the input of religion into morality is positively mischievous in the sense that religion invents crimes (such as suicide or the use of contraceptives) which are not natural crimes, that is are not activities which normally produce misery ; and invents virtues (such as self-mortification or doctrinal orthodoxy) which are not natural virtues, that is, are not activities which normally promote happiness in oneself and others." (*ibid*:

335) Thus, Hume seeks to promote modernity by weakening religion which he attacks both on cognitive and moral grounds: the former because it is a central assertions devoid of rational basis and the latter not only because genuine morality can and must stand independent of religion but also religion in more than one ways is a negation of morality in so far as morality promotes a joyful life which is undermined by religious practices like mortification and regimentation.

II.3. Immanuel Kant

Our discussion till now of the critique of religion provided by Descartes and Hume has shown that their response to religion is not wholesome. Descartes' response was half hearted and Hume's reaction was one of wholehearted rejection which did not amount to a critique in a substantive sense. It is only in Kant we come across a critique of religion in a full blooded sense. This is because the modern philosophy reached its fruition or climax in Kant. Kant not only championed modernity but also, on the one hand, filled the gaps in the body of modernity, and, on the other, rectified what he considered to be its indefensible tenets. The example for the latter is his replacement of utility-centered ethics of modernity by duty-centered one. The former is illustrated by his most significant attempt to provide content to the concept of universal human nature. The concept of universal human nature is central to modernity in distancing itself from the pre-modern, central to which was the idea of human nature as culture bound. Pre-Kantian modern philosophers did understand this crucial point about modernity but could not provide an adequate content to the concept of universal human nature. One of the aims of the three *Critiques* of Kant was to work out a conception of reason that precisely provides such content. The common human nature is envisioned by Kant in terms of a

categorial structure (first *Critique),* Reason as the locus of the Moral Law (second *Critique*) and Aesthetic Sense which is the ground of Universal and Necessary delight associated with the experience of the beautiful as distinct from the experience of the merely agreeable (third *Critique*). Before we proceed to see how Kant critiques religion on the lines of his critical philosophy so as to promote modernity of which he was one of the ablest champions it is necessary to highlight his moorings in modernity.

Kant's zeal for modern thought and ethos is very well brought out by his espousal of Enlightenment in his celebrated writing of 1744 titled 'What is Enlightenment?'. He looked upon the Enlightenment, the most aggressive rejection of the pre-modern, as heralding man's freeing himself from a self-imposed tutelage. "If we are asked: 'Do we now live in an enlightened age?' the answer is: 'No, but we do live in an age of Enlightenment'." (1986:267) According to Kant, "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-imposed tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another." (*ibid*:263) It is significant to note that in his discourse on tutelage and the need to be free from it he places religion at the center. "As things now stand, much is lacking which prevents men from being, or easily becoming, capable of correctly using their own reason in *religious* matters with assurance and free from outside direction". (*ibid*:268, emphasis added). However, Kant does see the end of the tunnel since he finds "clear indication the field has now been opened wherein men may freely deal with these things and that the obstacles to general enlightenment or the release from self-imposed tutelage are gradually being reduced. In this respect this is an age of Enlightenment." (*ibid*:268). It is very important to note that religion for Kant occupies central place

among those issues which need to be publicly discussed so as to realize the spirit of our age which demands that we overcome the self-imposed tutelage. Reinforcing this point he remarks that he has related the main point of Enlightenment (the escape from tutelage) to matters of religion "because our rulers have no interest in playing the guardian with respect to the arts and sciences and also because religious incompetence is not only the most harmful but also the most degrading of all." (*ibid*:268). So much for the centrality of the critique of religion to the philosophical task Kant undertook as a public philosopher and not just an academic one.

There is one more strand in Kant's thinking that heightens the significance of religion and its critique within Kantian framework. This concerns what Carvounas calls "modern temporality". One of the most distinctive marks of modernity *vis-a-vis* the pre-modern is its time-consciousness which is completely different from its pre-modern counterpart. Carvounas rightly begins his narrative with a poignant and pregnant remark made by Tocqueville in his classic *Democracy in America:* "I go back from age to age up to the remotest antiquity; but I find no parallel to what is occurring before my eyes: as the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity" (quoted in Carvounas, David, 2002:xii). Tocqueville successfully captures one of the defining features of modernity, namely, a complete rupture with the past, that is, a total disjunction between the past and the future. Modernity hammered repeatedly the idea that the past has ceased to shed its light upon the future and the future has its own source of light, namely, human imagination that engenders expectations. That the modern world could move towards the future confidently putting the past behind is one of the formative ideas of modernity. The novelty of modernity as an epoch lies more with this view of the past than anything else. Along with this bold assertion comes a

challenge, namely, a successful working out of a new form of temporality "the manner by which past, present and future are coordinated – or better yet, to a specifically modern temporality which decisively changed our orientation or *relationship to the future*." (*ibid*:2). This stance of the philosophers of Enlightenment towards past is not at all surprising since they looked upon the pre-modern as the childhood of mankind as against the modern age as embodying adulthood of humankind. However, this perspective of the philosophers of Enlightenment needs elaboration. Kosellek convincingly shows us how two thousand years of history was taken till the eighteenth century to be a reservoir of multiple experiences which the posterity could learn and internalize. (cf, *ibid*). Such an idea of *historia magistra vitae* which persisted till the eighteenth century was subsequently replaced by the "historical process", a uniquely modern concept. "The dethroning of the old *topos* of *hitoria magistra vitae* decisively changed the relation between past and future." (*ibid*). Making Koselleck's point clear Carvounas says "by the late eighteenth century the past was increasingly perceived as a process of unique, non reproducible events, and this in turn permitted the future to be conceived as potentially different from the past. It is here that a specifically modern temporality can be distinguished from its pre-modern homologue, a modern temporality with a distinctly modern rapport with the future." (*ibid*: 3).

All this does not mean that the pre-moderns did not have the very idea of future. It is absurd to say so. The ancient and medieval futurity was determined by a kind of orientation that kept future at bay by means of an enduring and undying past, as opposed to modern futurity which was free from a 'superseded' past. In other words, to quote Carvounas again, "Premodern temporality … envisions the future less at the expense of the past than in terms of the past, or in terms of an atemporal

present." (*ibid*:4). Carvounas draws our attention to the highly perceptive observations of M.M. Bakhtin regarding epic literature which was held as paradigmatic creative achievement in the pre-modern thinking. Of course, even today we valorize epics but mainly for aesthetic reasons. But pre-modern valorization of epics has its basis in the conviction that epics concern an absolute past, the beginning and, ethically speaking, a golden age. The straightforward implication is that the value of the future is determined by its proximity to the glorious past. Such an idea is not confined to literary works but finds expression in the pre-modern philosophical thought. For instance, the real world of Plato which is constituted by eternal Forms which does not permit anything new to enter that world. Everything in the empirical world is subject to birth, growth and decay whose logic leaves no space for future in the sense that "the future is already charted out, already articulated and contained within an inevitable cycle of growth and dissolution." (*ibid*:6) Aristotle, no doubt, was dissatisfied with such cyclical pattern especially in connection with the political theory that Plato associated with his metaphysical position. Yet, Aristotle does not make room for the possibility of novelty either in natural or political realm. He does not recognize the possibility of any future development in the fundamental scheme of things. The Christian religious tradition which inherited the Aristotelian thought brought in a basic change in the pre-modern *topos* construed on the lines of the Greek thought. According to the Christian tradition, best represented by Saint Augustine, the Greek understanding of the past was replaced by a conception of the past organically linked to the doctrine of creation. "The Christian belief in a world created by God gave the world a precise beginning and a determinate end (as God has assigned) … The historic past is thereby understood universally in terms of everything having its place in the Divine plan" (*ibid*:7) such that in a sense future already exists as connected to Divine providence.

Modernity rejects all this by producing a fundamental discontinuity between past and future. After all, the attitude towards past and towards future are two sides of the same coin de-valorizing one while valorizing the other. But the challenge to modernity was to work out a new logic of modes of time. In the pre-modern age the idea of past as determining the present and future provided temporality and a general coherence – a comfort not available for modernity which had to work out its own coherent scheme. So long as such scheme was not available, modern mind "wanders in obscurity" as Tocqueville understood. But Tocqueville did not anticipate that such an obscurity will vanish sooner than he thought. The modern philosophers accepted the challenge of providing a reconciliation of the modes of time which made room for disjunction between past and future. Immanuel Kant, the best representative of Enlightenment, was the first to do so.

Central to the Kantian theory of modes of time was the idea of progress. No doubt, there were philosophers before him who did articulate the concept of progress. However, many of them confined the concept to the realm of scientific knowledge and philosophy as they were construed with the emergence of modernity. That is their concept of progress had nothing to do with the social and political domain. Their successors did enlarge the scope of the concept to include those domains. But their account of progress, though more inclusive than their predecessors, did not constitute a theoretical perspective. Their belief in the idea of progress was, Breisach notes, "sustained less by an agreed-upon theory than by a broadly shared expectation." (quoted in *ibid*:23). The theory that could provide a new temporal coherence for the modern world so as to centrally accommodate the expectation/s constitutive of the modern idea of progress had to be as theoretically rich as the idea of cycles or Christian salvation which it sought to displace. The need for such a theory was first sought to be met by Kant. As Carvounas points out, "one of the

most succinct statements in defense of what was a guiding theoretical assumption of the Enlightenment, and, in various guises of modernity, is found in Kant' s *Idea for Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose."*(*ibid*:23)

Central to Kant's essay mentioned above is the valorization not of the past which was fading but a future yet to be created. In his essay Kant is not concerned with history as an empirical study, nor was he concerned with historiography. It concerns a perspective in history taken from the vantage point of future possibilities. The centers of gravity of such a perspective are 'progress' and 'nature' which are, in the Kantian lexicon, *ideas* or *pure concepts of reason* or *ideas of pure reason*. As all the students of Kant know, ideas of reason, unlike categories which are pure concepts of understanding, are not applicable to anything given to us in experience. Theoretical ideas of reason, namely, 'Soul', 'God as creator of the world' and 'World/Totality' regulate our thinking about matters of fact whereas practical ideas of reason, that is 'God as a morally perfect being', 'Immortality of the soul' and 'Freedom of the will' regulate our thinking about matters of conduct. Hence, ideas of reason are not constitutive of experience as their function does not lie in their application but in regulation of our thinking. The concept of nature and the concept of progress are such ideas of reason. The employment of ideas provides unity and sense of direction to our cognitions, empirical or moral. Hence, "the idea of nature projects a sense of homogeneity in the world, which serves to suggest that the regularity of our experiences corresponds to something outside of ourselves..." (*ibid*:24). The concept of progress which is another idea of reason enabled Kant "to conserve temporal continuity by connecting the past with the present – not as an aggregate of timeless experiences but as a procession with the common direction towards a common end." (*ibid:24*) That is, even if we are blind to perceive the hidden mechanisms of

nature, the idea of progress, as Kant succinctly points out "may yet serve as a guide to us in representing an otherwise planless aggregate of human actions as conforming … to a system." (quoted in *ibid*). Since modernity is or will be bringing about unprecedented change in future, the horizons of understanding the future cannot be encroached upon by the past. What is unique to the modern idea of progress is the faith that the past is not a repository of exemplary lessons of wisdom but something to be superseded.

The two ideas of reason get interlinked by the idea of nature as working according to a plan and the idea of progress as realizing that plan which demands that the past should be superseded. Significant in this connection is the idea that it is nature which has a plan and the plan is not a Divine one. Carvounas rightly points out "While contemporary political philosophy may consider this assumption as suspect, it was nevertheless a strategic and successful perspective for those enlighteners who wished to offer coherence to the world without reference to the *super*natural." (*ibid*: 25). Though, as an idea of reason, the idea of nature with a plan has no objective grounds, that is, we have no empirical basis to believe in it, rejecting it makes history a random process or, in Kant's words, a "dismal reign of chance". This apart, the notion of plan in nature enables us to give up our fears and doubts produced by our past experience about our future so that we can be confident about our destiny "to be fulfilled on earth". Keeping in mind this notion of plan in nature and progress as realization of that plan Kant finds two stages in the evolution of human history which Carvounas characterizes as pre-deliberative and deliberative. In the pre-deliberative stage human actions, regarding the way they shape their life, were by and large unintentional in the sense the future orientation was limited and progress was determined by the seeds planted by nature in human beings. Nature had to work behind our back. In the deliberative

stage progress is effected by conscious activity oriented to future by self-conscious authors of their own future. Secondly, the pre-deliberative stage is marked by social antagonism thanks to the unsocial sociability of human beings, that is, human tendency to constitute a society which faces constantly that the threat of break up, thanks to human tendency to live as individuals. Such a threat recedes with the onset of the deliberative stage. It is this invidious distinction between two stages that drives Kant to reject the idea of past golden age as a debasing fantasy. The notion of a golden past with its concomitant idea of human history as the story of a fall is particularly nourished by religion. Carvounas rightly observes that the two stages "coincide with the epochal demarcation of pre-modern and modern… Kant's theory of progress, as outlined in the idea for a Universal history, therefore, can be seen as a theory of the movement from pre-modernity to modernity." (*ibid*:28) We may also note the point that religion is by implication considered by Kant to be an ethos or ideology of pre-deliberative stage which, therefore, has to be superseded along with the stage which it guided.

Though nature with its plan is behind our back goading us into action, we became, again as nature planned, authors of our own future, taking over from nature the plan for the future. The deliberative stage, that is the modern age, heralds our taking over the plan of nature. The idea of progress as something more than a modern way of looking at the past becomes in Kant's hand a "mental bridge from the past to the future, … from a history guided by natural necessity to a history constructed out of free conscious actions, from pre-modern to modern orientation towards the future." (*ibid*:30) which is unbounded and emancipatory such that the past becomes bereft of any meaning for the future and any continuity with the past deprives the future its unboundness and emancipatory character.

Our discussion of Kant's view regarding the philosophy of Enlightenment of which he was the ablest representative and his attempt to provide a new temporality indicates clearly his attitude towards religion and the pre-modern world. His attitude is clearly negative but it was not, unlike those of French materialists like Holbach, Helvetius and the post-Kantian materialists like Feuerbach or Empiricists like Hume, dismissive of religion as such. At the same time he did not share the religious sympathies of the Expressivist philosophers who, contrary to Kant, rejected the subject-object distinction germane to modernity. In fact, Kant worked out a new idea of religion on Pietist lines and pitted it against traditional conception/s of religion, Catholic or Lutheran. His conception of religion was constructed on a critique of the pre-modern conception of religion. Such a critique served as a fulcrum for the critique of pre-modernity, on the one hand, and for providing a religious dimension to modernity which facilitates the celebration of modernity. In what follows, we look at the broad contours of Kant's conception of religion keeping in mind the fact that Kant advanced a modernist critique of religion even while attempting to provide a modernist conception of religion.

In pre-modernist scheme where religion occupies the central place religion stands on two pillars, empirical and ethical, or, in Kant's terminology, theoretical and practical. The empirical /theoretical pillar has two components: a) the world as knowable *and* as known in terms of a *divine plan* and b) God himself as knowable. Kant undermines (a) by means of the mechanistic view of nature and (b) by delegitimizing theology by demonstrating how it results from an illegitimate employment of theoretical idea of God when theoretical reason basing itself on the fundamental principle of dialectical reason engages in a spurious application of such an idea to an 'alleged' object of experience. In doing so, it overlooks its own proper function, namely, regulation of our thinking about the world.

The second pillar of religion in the pre-modern scheme concerns the moral domain. Traditionally religion was considered as the basis of morality which stands in need of justification and legitimation by religion. Kant undermines the second pillar of religion by reversing the picture by showing that it is religion which needs justification in terms of morality. Before we see how he does so, it is necessary to note how Kant deprives religion of any cognitive content in a substantial sense.

As we all know Kant characterizes his critical philosophy in terms of empirical realism and transcendental idealism. Empirical realism maintains that objects of perception are given to us directly. Transcendental idealism maintains that things themselves are unknowable and objects of experience are not things in themselves. As Korner points out, "Kant believes that without distinguishing between transcendental and empirical reality the apparent conflict between science, on the one hand, and morality and religion, on the other, cannot be resolved." (1955: 96). The resolution of the conflict between science, on the one hand, and morality, on the other, was brought about by pushing freedom, immortality and God into the realm of faith as opposed to knowledge. It is in this connection that Kant admits that he had to abolish knowledge in order to make room for faith. Such a faith is rational in the sense that the talk of freedom, immortality and God are not empty or meaningless. The ideas of freedom, immortality and God regulate our thinking about matters of conduct. They concern the practical reason, though not theoretical reason, which is involved in our judgment regarding what is morally right. To be more precise, they are linked to fundamental moral experience, namely, apprehension of categorical imperative. Yet, these religiously charged ideas which Kant called practical ideas are not constitutive of moral experience. They only regulate moral experience and, hence, are externally related to moral experience. Therefore, religion is not internally related to morality. It is in a sense peripheral to

morality whose independence for Kant is axiomatic. To quote Kant "morality in no way needs religion … but is rather self-sufficient by virtue of pure practical reason." (1998:33) (This does not mean religion is irrelevant to morality; in fact, according to Kant, "morality … inevitably leads to religion" (*ibid*:35) However, religion even then serves the purpose of morality, whereas in the traditional scheme morality served the purpose of religion.)

Kant reinforces the autonomy of morality *vis-à-vis* religion by claiming that the moral law to which we freely submit our will has no divine source. It is itself divine. This is the first strand of Kant's secular but humanist ethics. The second strand concerns the notion of freedom which is one of the presuppositions of our moral consciousness. The concept of freedom is so central to religion which considers freedom to be God – given, that it is religious thinkers and not scientists who bitterly fought against astrology. How does Kant transform what is supposed to be God given to something specifically human? The radical character of Kant's notion of freedom can be recognized not only by juxtaposing it with the religious conception of freedom but also by contrasting it with the soft notion of freedom entertained by the Enlightenment thinkers who explained motivation in causal terms but did not find any incompatibility of causally construed motivation, on the one hand, with freedom, on the other. For one is free in being motivated by one's own desires however caused. Kant's notion of freedom is radical. It considers even the determination of our will by consideration of utility to be rendering our freedom spurious. For Kant freedom is absolute. What paves the way for Kant's radical notion of freedom is his claim that man as a rational being is part of the kingdom of ends. For Enlightenment thinkers like Hume man was an object, albeit a special object, that is, in Kant's terms, only a phenomenon. But, according to Kant, man as a subject and a rational being is noumenal being. When he obeys the

moral law he is obeying something which has its locus in his own rational nature. In Kant's scheme of ethics, "moral life is equivalent to freedom, in this radical sense of self-determination by the moral will. This is called 'autonomy'. Any deviation from it, any determination of the will by some external considerations, some inclination, even of the most joyful benevolence, some authority, even as high as God himself, is condemned as heteronomy." (Taylor, Charles, *Hegel*, 1975:32) As Taylor aptly says, "when Kant said that he wanted to demolish claims to speculative knowledge about God to make room for faith, he was not just offering a consolation prize. His principal interest was in the moral freedom of the subject, and this in a radical sense, that man should draw his moral precepts out of his own will and not from any external source, be it god himself." (*ibid*:31)

The above discussion showed how Kant seeks to demonstrate that religion is not constitutive of morality regarding which it has only a regulative role. We can say that according to him it is morality which is constitutive of religion. This becomes clear when we look at his conception of religion which he puts forth as a radial alternative to the received religious traditions which are pre-modern. What is that radical conception of religion and how is morality constitutive of that?

The very title of his work on religion *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason,* as Adams points out "rightly suggests [that] Kant's religious thought is strongly rationalistic." (1998:vii) However, Kant fundamentally differed from his contemporaries who sought to work out rationalistic conception of religion. For, unlike them, he did not attempt to provide logical proofs of the existence of God. On the contrary he demonstrated the illegitimacy of 'such proofs'. The rationalist framework for religion which Kant thought to provide concerned practical reason in which faith in God (also immortality and freedom) is to be grounded so as to make that faith a rational faith. Thus, our rational faith in God has a practical basis

though not a theoretical one. To quote Adams again, "In Kant's view inability of our theoretical faculties to prove the truth or falsity of religious claims leaves room for our practical reason to determine our religious stance. He welcomes this because he thinks it is crucial for religion to be controlled by moral considerations." (1998:vii-viii) Hence, according to Kant, religion to be adequate and legitimate needs to be bound within the domain of morality. Religion, therefore, needs morality more than morality needs religion. This is aptly clear from the requirements that Kant specifies for a true religion which he calls 'true church': 1) its doctrines and practices must not be in conflict with the principles of rational morality; 2) it must assign priority to pure religious faith over what it considers to be revelation; and 3) it must come so close to pure religious faith that we slowly dispense with specific religious faiths as a vehicle for religion. (cf Kant, Immanuel, 1998)

The question is 'What such a conception of religion amounts to?' Taylor seems to be right when he says that it is one closer to pietism. Pietism reacted against formalism of Lutheranism which stressed right beliefs and right rituals. Pietism swore by inward and heartfelt relation to Christ. Pietism departed from dogma and confessional differences. Pietists were against intellectualization of religion and, hence, opposed to so called 'religious truths' considered as revealed and defended by theology. For the pietists, religion was spontaneous response of the heart. It is interesting to note that philosophers of Enlightenment were more unsympathetic to pietism than to official Christianity. The latter made truth claims which they could attack whereas the former disarmed them by making or sharing no truth claims.

In short, by going near Pietism Kant rejected religion while accepting religiosity. By doing so, he thought that he had undermined the pre-modern conception of religion and thus pre-modern ethos itself and provided a new conception of

religion more philosophically credible than its pre-modern counterpart. In so doing, he felt he had supplied what modernity lacked under its stewardship of Enlightenment thinkers.

II.4. Hegel

Our discussion of Kant's philosophy of religion in relation to his perspective on pre-modern versus modern pays the way for dealing with its Hegelian counterpart. The difference between Kant and Hegel is quite obvious. As we have seen, Kant's ethical view and his conception of religion which was close to pietism are individualistic. For Hegel ethics was primarily communitarian and hence religion also ought to be so. However, what is common to both of them is the questioning of religion as a repository of highest truths. For Kant religion to be genuine must exist within the bounds of mere reason even if it concerns the domain of faith. Religion so construed cannot be a set of doctrines since those doctrines cannot be established on rational grounds and therefore do not constitute knowledge. It is located only in the relation of heart with Divinity, as pietism maintains. For Hegel, no doubt, religion may be legitimately treated as a repository of truths but those truths do not constitute highest truths which fall within the domain of philosophy. Religion, therefore, has to be superseded by philosophy. So, while for Kant religion needs to be bound by reason, for Hegel it is lower than philosophy in the hierarchy just as religion is higher than art in the hierarchy. Since the pre-modern privileges religion just as the modern privileges philosophy, critique of religion (that is, showing its limits) is the critique of the pre-modern. This holds for both Kant and Hegel in different ways.

As it is well known, Hegel construes the history of the world including human history, particularly the history of ideas and institutions, as embodying the process

of Spirit's self-realization as Absolute. Hegel seeks to understand everything against the background of such a philosophical cosmology, the core of which is 'the real is rational and the rational is real'. So, what has happened is in accordance with a cosmic plan which the Spirit has for its self-realization. So our ideas and institutions are expressions of the Spirit and its Reason. Where does religion figure and how does it figure in this story of rational expression of the Spirit?

Before we see how Hegel subordinates religion to philosophy, let us see how he subordinates it to State which is also a full realization of the Idea/Spirit in the form of a community which realizes the good in a common life. More than institutions like the family and civil society the State is self-subsistent one. It is an expression of the rational will of the Spirit in public life and thus the realization of rational necessity, and, therefore, of the Spirit. It is due to this reason religion must accept its subservience to the State. According to Hegel, as Taylor says, "Religion contains the same truths as the state expresses in reality. True religion should thus support the state; it should cultivate the inner conviction that the state ought to be obeyed, supported, identified with. It is a deviation when religion either retreats into other-worldliness or turns around and sets itself up against the state. The state should offer help and protection to the Church, for religion is a form of Spirit's knowledge of itself. But it cannot accept the claim of the church to be higher, for this would imply that the state was simply an external authority…, and not itself an embodiment of reason." (1975:439) In this passage Taylor brings out how Hegel reversed the pre-modern picture of the relation between State and religion. With the birth of modernity true religion does not antagonize the State, rather it underpins the State's authority. To arrive at a new conception of religion-State relation European society had to undergo Reformation to pave the way for establishment of State as the embodiment of Spirit's rationality. This is because,

according to Hegel, "The Catholic variant of Christianity was not yet purified of its intrication with external forms, with sacraments and priestly power. Thus the Catholic church is led to fight the state for earthy supremacy instead of accepting that the earthy realization of the Christian community is in the state." (1975:466).

In spite of the valorization that State gets in Hegel's hands, Hegel recognizes the limits within which the State expresses the rational will of the Absolute. This subordinate relationship with which religion stands to the State does not enable the State to take over the role of the Church because the State cannot be confessional. After all, the highest achievement of modernity in the political domain is complete separation between them. Secondly, the final stage of Spirit's self-realization cannot be provided by the State. This is because the highest expression of the Spirit must lie in pure self-contemplation which is beyond the role of the State. Also the State is specific to a people. But "the cosmic spirit which must come to recognize himself underlies not just my own community but all of history, and beyond this the whole universe." (1975:465). Hence, we must recognize religion as an autonomous expression of the Spirit and therefore as something more than what underpins the State.

In Hegel's scheme art, religion and philosophy, in that order, constitute the modes by which the Spirit expresses itself when it reaches the final stages of its realization process. It is noteworthy that Hegel lists them in an ascending order of superiority. Art is not representational whereas religion is. However, representational element in religion is inadequate since it is not couched in pure conceptual thought and this failure is responsible for its inability to bring out the necessary connections in Reality which is the task of philosophy. This needs elaboration.

In Hegel's scheme, as we have noted, the Absolute expresses itself and for itself most transparently in Philosophy (particularly *his* Philosophy) and less perfectly so in religion and even less perfectly so in art. In art the Absolute or God is only presented and not represented. The presentation is by means of images. It is a mode of consciousness of the Idea without being representational. The domain of representation is that of religion. Hegel uses the term Vorstellung which he contrasts to thinking or thought for which Hegel uses the term Denken. So, there is no Vorstellung in art for Hegel though the term was usually associated with art. Of course, one can speak of Vorstellung even in the case of philosophy, that is, representation by means of pure concepts unlike Vorstellung in the case of religion which represents by means of sensuous images that act as symbols. However, Hegel himself restricts Vorstellung to religious representation.

Representation of man, cosmos and God in religion, which is the representation by means of images, lacks clarity with which we can grasp God and God's relation to the world due to the opacity of the medium. The religious story of the fall of man in *Genesis* is a symbolic representation of the truth philosophically expressed as man's turning against the Universal, thereby affirming himself as only a particular which in religious language becomes the sin of Adam.

Though, religious representation of Idea, that is, Vorstellung proper, is a less adequate mode of representation than that of philosophy. The former, even while being lower than the latter in terms of adequacy is still higher than art. This is particularly so because the Spirit or God seeks to know itself in the inwardness of thought whereas in art the Spirit becomes conscious of itself in sensuous form in terms of objects of intuition, that is, in external terms.

So, art is sensuous presentation of the Idea or, in Hegel's terms, 'intuitive consciousness of Absolute Spirit'. It is a mode of contemplative consciousness which is not representational. It presents or portrays but does not represent Reality, that is, Spirit, since to represent is to describe by narrative means. It does not *say* but can only *show*. Taylor brings out this point of Hegel by means of an illustration when he says that "Even if Tolstoy had not added passages of theoretical exposition to *War and Peace*, we would still take from it his vision that great men do not design and control history as their admires think, that they are rather thrown up on the crest of deeper waves. But this is not described in the novel, as the actions and thoughts of the characters are." (1975:471) In contrast, religion characterizes "the Absolute in declarative sentences which are intended as correct description." (*ibid*) This is also so with philosophy where description is in terms of abstract concepts whereas in the case of religion it is done is terms of not so abstract concepts. Also, religious thought "uses sensuous images, but not just to contemplate their sensuous referents, rather as symbols with strain to render a higher content. This description of a higher domain in images drawn from a lower one [that is, art] is typical of religious thought." (1975:480) Unlike art, religion has inwardness integral to it. Because of its proximity to both art and philosophy, the paradigmatic cases of the sensuous and the abstract respectively, religion contains blend of sensible images and universal concepts. And for Hegel an example of this is *Almighty*.

Even while being superior to art, as a mode of consciousness of the Spirit which finds expression in it, "what religion lacks even in its purer formulations is the grasp of the inner necessity which unites the articulations of the Idea and brings them back to unity." (*ibid*) Demonstration of interconnectedness and thus representation of he Idea is the task of thought, that is, Philosophy – the task which

can be accomplished only by means of most universal, and, therefore, the most abstract concepts which only Philosophy can provide. Unlike the Expressivists and also Pietists like Kant, Hegel does not reduce religion to the level of feelings. Like philosophers of Enlightenment he treats it as a repository of truth claims. However, unlike the former who consider those truth claims to be false (and even lacking in sense), Hegel considers them to be truths though incomplete, inadequate and far less felicitous *vis-à-vis* truths of philosophy.

To sum up, Hegel's critique of religion places it within the limits of the State, on the one hand, and Philosophy, on the other. Though he does vehemently argue for significance of religion both for life and thought, he subordinates it to State in practice and to philosophy in theory.

II.5. Karl Marx

The discussion till now regarding the modernist critique of religion has shown that the modern philosophers' critiques of religion, barring Hume, have been quite moderate in the sense they only weaken it or limit it or subordinate it to the so-called 'higher mode of thought'. It is in Marx one finds a critique of religion so radical as to become a wholesale and unmitigated rejection of it. Like his modernist predecessors, he indentifies an organic relation between religion and the pre-modern ethos. It is not surprising that Marx is aptly described as "perhaps the first and the greatest modernist" with his *Manifesto* as 'the archetype of a century of modernist manifestos and movements to come". (cf. Sayer, Derek, 1991:10) Marx's zeal for modernity and outright condemnation of the pre-modern is very ably brought out in his characterization of capitalism as an emancipatory system which is a harbinger of a new civilization in the place of a decadent feudal one. According to him, capitalism "has created more massive and colossal productive

forces than have all preceding generations together... It has accomplished wonders far surpassing" (quoted *ibid*) all the achievements of previous civilizations. He is convinced that "Only the capitalist production of commodities revolutionizes the entire economic structure of society eclipsing all previous epochs." (quoted, *ibid*) Marx does not see the pre-capitalist epoch in isolation from its religious ideology. The farther a society is from capitalist system the more religious it is. Marx considers what he calls "Asiatic mode of production" to be more decadent than feudalism, the economic system of the pre-modern Western civilization which just preceded the modern one. This is clear from his characterization of Indian society whose life, according to him, is "undignified, stagnatory and vegetative life". (Ibid:15) He construes the wretchedness of pre-capitalist Asiatic society in terms of its religious consciousness which is "brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow." (*ibid*). However, Marxist critique of religion stretches to Christianity also and, in fact, religion in general. He uses 'Christianity' and 'religion' interchangeably since it was Christianity which was the main religious tradition of the West. We may focus on a couple of points in this connection.

The first point concerns Marxist conception of man. What distinguishes man from other animals is the fact that it is only in the case of man that the mode of satisfying his physical/biological needs alters his nature unlike in the case of the animals. That is to say, while satisfying his physical or natural needs man transforms them into human needs. Christianity failed to recognize this central feature of human nature. Marx traces Christianity's failure to rid us of our needs precisely because it failed to recognize those needs as human needs (whereas

capitalism devalues human needs by reducing them to the effective demands of the market).

The second point concerns the problem of alienation and its relation to Christianity and any religious tradition for that matter. On the one hand, religion ensures that "the productions of human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life… entering into relation both with one another and the human race" (*ibid*:61) In this connection Marx compares the way the fictitious deities of religion govern human destinies with the way the market governs the human relations in the capitalist society with the difference: unlike the deities of religion, the market is not imaginary. Thus, religion is an expression of the condition of alienation which is the negation of the human nature. On the other hand, religion, even while recognizing the problem of alienation, provides a spurious solution to it. This is because alienation is primarily a social condition brought about by division of labor, private property and commodity production and not a spiritual condition. Hence, its solution has to be a social one, rather than a spiritual one provided by religion. In fact, it is this spurious solution to a genuine problem that makes religion "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world… the spirit of spiritless conditions…. the opium of the people." (*ibid*:149) Therefore, to abolish religion as the illusory happiness of people is to demand their real happiness." (ibid).

The next point regarding Marx' critique of religion is most important. As we have noted, Marx was an unrepentant champion of modernity since he did think that capitalism was a liberative force. He was convinced that the modern world is bathed in the 'general light' of capitalism. However, though capitalism paved the way for modernity it could constitute a fetter on the liberative force of modernity. Marx here brings out a parallel between capitalism and Christianity. According to

Marx, the transition from pre-modernity to modernity is a passage from the concrete (and therefore the particular) to the abstract (and therefore universal). In the writings of Marx very frequently we come across the connection between 'abstract' and 'capitalism'. In the pre-modern societies the human relations were characterized by personal dependencies whereas in capitalist society they have become impersonal, a relation that fits the abstract entities. The abstract individual of the modern society is contrasted by Marx with the species/being which is what man will be in the future society that Marx envisions. Christianity jells well with this notion of abstract man. Though more evolved than pre-Christian religious modes of consciousness "Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, deism, etc., is the more fitting form of religion." (*ibid*:16) The proximity of Christianity with capitalism implies that the abolition of religion is necessary not only for decimating the pre-modern mode of life but also for setting at naught capitalism whose abstract idea of man squares well with the abstract idea of man propounded by religion. The latter task is necessary to realize the emancipative promise of modernity. Marxist critique of religion thus goes beyond the critique of the pre-modern but goes towards a critique of capitalist modernity too. Thus, critique of religion paves the theoretical ground for the socialist modernity where alienation is overcome and man recognizes himself as a species/being and hence religion has no place in it. This position of Marx is in direct contrast with Weber's "critique of modernity [which] extended far beyond capitalism, to encompass 'rational socialism' as well". (*ibid*:4) Thus, Christianity was not only for Marx a part of ideology of the feudal/pre-modern societies but has extended its tentacles to the realm of capitalist modernity. Hence, capitalism is not antithetical to religion. It opposes religion only to the extent such an opposition is necessary for capital to grow and it promotes religion if it facilitates the growth of the capital.

While rounding up our discussion of the modernist critique of religion we reiterate the point that critique of religion by modernist thinkers was geared towards a critique of the pre-modern, on the one hand, and establish the intellectual credibility of modernity though, in the case of Marx that critique of religion was extended to capitalist modernity which was in one way a fetter on the liberative spirit of modernity and, on the other hand, a necessary condition for the emergence of a genuine modernity that can realize its potential for both economic and cultural emancipation.

Chapter III. Religious Critique of Modernity

This relatively shorter chapter deals with the religious response to modernity articulated by Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) and Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). The aim of this chapter is to juxtapose the religious critiques of modernity with the modernist critiques of religion dealt with in the previous chapter. On the other hand, this chapter seeks to pave the way for the discussion of the religious critiques of modernity advanced by Tolstoy and Gandhi in the next two chapters. This is necessary to identify how Tolstoy and Gandhi, while working out their religiously oriented critical response to modernity, both ran parallel to and substantially departed from those of their predecessors who were anchored in the same or similar spiritual tradition/s.

Further, what makes a study of Hamann and Kierkegaard significant is that in spite of being rooted in the same ethos of Christianity their critiques have different orientations. While Hamann's critique has an epistemological orientation, that of Kierkegaard has an existential one. Yet, the two orientations merge in a way that is significant, though not very apparent, in the sense both concern themselves with the world as it is and the life as it is lived here and now unfettered by discursive abstractions which constituted the defining feature of the philosophy and the science of their times which were the hallmarks of a new civilization they were located in as dissenters. If Hamann targets the theoretical icons created by Descartes (and Kant), Kierkegaard targets the ones created by Hegel. This chapter seeks to engage with the thoughts of these iconoclast thinkers.

III.1. Hamann's critique of modernity

Though Hamann's critique of modernity is religious, his religious commitment constitutes the root of that critique and as root it is not patently visible, and like root, it is the fountainhead of the tree, that is his critique of modernity. In fact, the religious character of his critique becomes more pronounced and effective because, ironically, it is latent.

As said earlier, Hamann's critique is epistemological in character, precisely because it is an epistemological dimension of modernity that is singled out for a sustained attack by him. As we have seen in Chapter I, central to the modernist conception of world, man and knowledge is the concept of reason. World was construed as an object whose structure was amenable to reason which was capable of grasping the mathematically specifiable laws that connect the facts whose totality is what the world is. Man is the subject and the subjectivity constitutes his uniqueness and this uniqueness he owes to something in him, namely, his capacity to think which is what reason is. This conception of reason as a capacity to think is different from the Greek conception of reason where it meant the capacity to contemplate on the scheme of values or order of meanings which nature embodies. The modern conception of reason is linked to the aim of controlling nature by grasping its workings. Knowledge is a product of reason's capacity for abstract representation, a task best achieved by deploying mathematics as the language. And this capacity of reason constitutes the human essence in the sense it is not specific to any cultural context. Universality of reason, thus, made room for universality of human nature itself with the result that cultural specificities were considered to be incidental to and not constitutive of human nature. Thus, the idea of universal human nature was put forth by modernity as one of the path breaking ideas which became the nucleus of the philosophical anthropology of modernity.

Finally, reason, so understood, was deemed to be a liberating force in the sense it not only frees us from physical wants by controlling nature but provides a spiritual fulfillment by identifying well thought out goals and modes of realizing them. Enlightenment is an explicit and forthright articulation of this philosophical crux of modernity. Very appropriately Berlin identifies three pillars of Enlightenment: 1) reason as "a logically connected structure of laws and generalizations susceptible of demonstration or verification…" (Berlin, Isaiah, 2000:278); 2) identity and universality of human nature which helps to define human beings as a single species with by and large common goals; and 3) the possibility of attaining to the common goals by means of reason that provides demonstrable knowledge of natural phenomena. To these three pillars we might add one more: ideally knowledge produced by reason has universality as its defining feature, a feature it owes to the abstraction involved in its texture. Hamann is rightly recognized as 'the father of Counter-Enlightenment' since he seeks to demolish these four pillars of Enlightenment. It is but natural that Hamann starts his critique by attacking the first pillar.

It may be noted that among the scholars who have dealt with Hamann there is a difference of opinion on the question whether Hamann attacked reason itself or only the modernist conception of reason. Some scholars speak of Hamann as an opponent of discursive reason as opposed to intuitive reason. Those scholars take as their support Hamann's words "Reason is language, logos. On this marrowbone I gnaw, and shall gnaw myself to death on it." (quoted *ibid*:250). Reason in this sense is linked to Logos whose creative power "gives reality to all there is, and which animates human souls, for which nature, history, Holy Writ and much else God's voice that speaks to us." (*ibid*:251) In other words, Logos is what illuminates the world, man and man's relation to the world. While speaking of

logos, Hamann attaches to it a profound religious meaning; in fact, he identifies it with language of God. In doing so, as Charles Taylor says, Hamann "remains very much an orthodox Christian... [Hanmann's] language of God in nature is … the living speech of God to man; it is not *langue* but *parole* de Dieux, in that respect it is put alongside the Bible. (1975:27 fn) This conception of reason that is intuitive reason has nothing to do with the reason Hamann attacks. It is safe to say that in spite of his avowals Hamann rejected reason itself and sought to replace it by something radically different, in fact, radically antagonistic. The expression "intuitive reason" as oppose to "discursive reason" is somewhat misleading in characterizing Hamann's position. It is significant to note that Hamann identifies the concept of rationality with its rationalist articulation. As pointed out earlier, his first targets are Descartes, the father of modern epistemology and in particular its rationalist version, as well as Kant. Surprisingly, he opposes it by taking recourse to empiricism, particularly the philosophy of Hume, the most radical and consistent empiricist. This is in spite of the fact that both empiricism and rationalism share some fundamental tenets of modern epistemology such as foundationalism and representationalism. It is equally surprising that Kant was not a pure rationalist since his critical philosophy sought to synthesize rationalism and empiricism. Perhaps, Hamann thought, like many others after him, Kantian synthesis tilted in favor of rationalism.

Be it as it may, what he found to be fascinating in Hume was the centrality of *belief* in Hume's epistemological scheme as against the concept of demonstrable claims which were the core of the rationalist epistemology. Of course, empiricists too were tempted by such a concept as evidenced by their sensationalist orientation which acquired a sophisticated form in the hands of their 20th century descendents. But Hume distanced himself from such a propensity. Hamann's belief-centered

epistemology for which he considered himself to be indebted to Hume has been lucidly articulated by Hamann himself: "Our own existence and the existence of all things outside us must be believed and cannot be determined in any other way". He reinforces his commitment to belief-centered epistemology when he says, "Belief is not the product of the intellect, and can therefore also have no casuality by it: since *belief* has a little ground as *taste or sight*." (quoted *ibid*:280) All this Hamann maintains in spite of the fact that Hume would not have any sympathy with Hamann's epistemological scheme. What Hamann found to be fascinating in Hume was Hume's rejection of any logical relationship between cause and effect. Instead Hume located the relation in the psychological phenomenon of habit. So, Hamann used Hume's arguments for negative purpose as a fulcrum for rejecting the rationalist epistemology. But in order to provide a positive content to what he took from Hume he related belief to faith. This transformation of belief to faith enables him to metamorphose belief-centered epistemology to faith -centered epistemology. It may be noted that Hume too did speak of 'faith'; after all, he did reject all the possibility of rational justification of the principle of induction in which all that we can have is only an 'animal faith'. For Hamann, 'faith' has a meaning that goes beyond animality. It is this faith which enables him to assert that the connection between cause and effect, means and ends is not just physical but spiritual. His sympathy with Hume becomes even more pronounced when he asserts that there are no *a priori* truths about nature. However, he goes beyond Hume in including in experience our encounter with tradition as a repository of past beliefs and revelation through which we establish our relations with God who appears to us through nature. In that sense, experience is not a matter of pure intellect but centrally involves feelings. As Berlin points out, "Hamann boldly turns Hume's skepticism into an affirmation of belief – in empirical knowledge –

that is its own guarantee: the ultimate datum, for which it makes no sense to ask for some general rationale." (ibid:282)

Central to modern epistemology is clear cut gap between the subject and the object. Once this gap was introduced there arose the formidable task of relating the two so as to make the subject's epistemic access to the object possible and intelligible. Recourse to clear and distinct ideas as rationalists did or sense experience as empirisists did could be of no avail. Kant's whole attempt to bridge the gap ended in agnosticism. Hamann refuses to recognize this gap which he calls a 'loathsome ditch'. For him, thoughts which have their locus in so called subject are part of the very furniture realty is made of. In his view "there is no point outside the universe at which one can place oneself, from which the universe can be judged, condemned, justified, explained, proved." (*ibid*:285)

Another dichotomy which is central to modern epistemology which Hamann rejects is the one between reason and the faith. Centrality of faith does not, in Hamann's scheme, displace reason. It displaces ratiocination as the paradigmatic cognitive undertaking though it is only to faith and no other faculty that we owe our cognitive encounter with not only mundane things but also truths of the Bible and even God. The dichotomy between faith and reason is fallacious. For Hamann, reason is built on faith and hence cannot replace it. Every age accepted both. Religion is not irrational though an idea of rational religion is incoherent. Religion is cognitively valuable not because it has rational basis but because through it we come face to face with what is real.

Another central concept of modern epistemology which Hamann axes is that of universalism. The concept of universality makes its presence in modern thought felt in two ways: (a) as an ideal which all knowledge must aspire to in order to be

genuine by making itself context free since context bound knowledge is not knowledge at all; and (b) as a descriptive category in the modern philosophical anthropology where the notion of a common human essence independent of cultural differences is axiomatic. As against (a) Hamann argues that such a conception of knowledge is false, a construction of our own, thanks to our craving for abstraction. As an epistemic ideal it is spiritually debilitating because it reduces the rich variety of the Universe to a dead uniformity expressed in terms of a catalogue or formulae. Not only science but even religion is guilty of such a distortion when it seeks to domesticate God in terms of theological categories.

Hamann attacks the conception of universal human nature which modern thought construes in terms of reason and which the secular philosophers identified as common to all men. He does so by drawing our attention to the conflicting philosophies in different societies and even in the same society, - all seeking justification in terms of reason. Hence, the source of truth lies not in reason but in revelation. The experience and cognition of the revelation is conditioned by the cultures which men built for themselves and in terms of which they see themselves and alter themselves. In this sense the universal human nature is a travesty of truth. The universalist doctrine about human nature is used by the modern society to impose certain the ends on other societies which are then portrayed as incapable of going anywhere near those ends. Hamann's rejection of such an idea is motivated by his recognition that different civilizations pursued different ends and in doing so worked out different conceptions of the world which shaped their way of life and, therefore, were constitutive of the human nature in those societies. In short, the idea of a universal human nature facilitates the hegemony of modern civilization.

Further, Hamann vehemently opposes the modernist conception of knowledge as constituted by abstractions best promoted by Galileo's dictum that the language of

nature is mathematics. Hamann also speaks of language as constitutive of knowledge but for him to know nature is to decipher God's language which he speaks through revelation and our experience of nature when it is free from our analytical constructions. When freed from abstractions, mathematical or otherwise, time comes to us in the form of musical rhythms of our heartbeats, as the breath of nature and not as a form of perception as Kant thought or discontinuous points. So is the case with space. It comes as a flow and not as fragments. "What gives them [space and time] continuity is the 'thread' by means of which Providence – and it alone - unites them". (*ibid*:288)

Another pillar of modern epistemology is the concept of necessity in which the notion of determinative universe *a la Laplace* is located. It is this concept of necessity, metaphysical or scientific, that Hamann rejects as inimical to human vision of acting in order to achieve the ends spontaneously conceived. It is this idea that is the home of the so-called necessary truths. For Hamann, the so-called laws of nature are as contingent as the facts. Whatever that exists could have been otherwise if God has chosen to do so and he can still choose to do so. What we call necessary is only relatively stable and what we call contingent is only relatively changing. And hence, the distinction between them is one of degree and not of kind. The idea of nature as constituted by unchanging essences governed by necessary connections is antithetical to any conception of man, world and God nexus.

Hamann's critique of modern epistemology, some of whose dimensions we have looked at, takes him to critically respond to the modernist exclusive valorization of explanation as the paradigmatic epistemic category in opposition to understanding. This dichotomy between explanation and understanding has its origin in the modernist idea of nature as an object to be understood in mechanistic terms rather

than teleological ones. It is this idea that was the root of project modern science adopted in the 17th century to replace all teleological explanations by mechanistic ones in opposition to Aristotelian theory of explanation. It may be noted, that in the late 19th century and the early 20th century philosophers along with scientists working in human sciences engaged in a controversy generally known as Explanation vs Understanding (Erklaren vs Verstehen). According to some of the participants of the debate, who called themselves methodological dualists, maintained that the method of natural sciences was that of induction and that of human sciences (or what they called 'historical' / 'cultural' sciences) was that of interpretation. Methodological Dualists justified their position by claiming that the aim of natural sciences was explanation whereas the aim of human sciences was understanding. Since, the aims of the two kinds of sciences were different, their methods also must be different. Their rivals who called themselves Methodological Monists whose heirs in our times are positivists and hypothetico-deductivists, maintained that the method of natural sciences and human sciences was one and the same (though they differed among themselves what that method was) since both kinds of sciences aimed at explanation. It may be noted that even methodological dualists firmly maintained that natural sciences aimed at only explanation. That is, there was no difference in the community of modern scientists over the claim that our cognitive engagement with nature consists of explanation, that is, providing an account of natural phenomena in terms of laws. This is because we are convinced, as opposed to the pre-moderns, that intentionality has nothing to do with nature. Hamann firmly rejected this view. This is because his religious outlook refused to understand nature in terms of facts. For Hamann, nature is akin to a person, or better still, it echoes the voice of God which nature personifies. Berlin crisply but vividly summarizes Hamann's position when he says "To understand is to understand someone: things or events or facts as such

cannot be understood, only noted or described; by themselves they do not speak to us, they do not pursue purposes, they do not act or want or strive, they merely occur, are, exist – and come to be and pass away. To understand is to understand a voice speaking, or if not a voice, something else that conveys meaning, that is, the use of something – a sound, a patch of colors, a movement – to refer to, or stand for, something else." (*ibid*:298) Thus, Hamann's central epistemic notion is that of understanding such that nature needs to be configured not in terms of causes but in terms of meanings, not in terms of laws but in terms of purposes. The idea of Logos constitutes the *leit* motif of the language of God who speaks to us through nature. It is this conception of God which is completely ill at ease with the abstract conception of both philosophy and religious scholasticism. For Hamann, such a concrete conception of God is etched in popular mind.

So, to cognize nature is to understand it and to understand it is to be receptive to the language God speaks to us through nature. Since, understanding, unlike explanation, involves interpretation and since, interpretation makes way to divergence, Hamann vouches for plurality of knowledge. Secondly, such receptivity involves faith and feeling which ordinary mortals are more capable of than specialists. Hamann was the first to call into question the exclusive privilege accorded to the so-called expert knowledge.

Scholars like Berlin while recognizing the deeply religious and spiritual commitment of Hamann's world view and theory of knowledge speak of secular dimension of his perspective. This does not mean that he shared the secular world view which emerged in the 17th century according to which the sense of the world in within the world, bringing about a 'disenchanted world' to use Max Weber's expression. Perhaps, what these scholars meant is that there was nothing specifically Christian about his theoretical framework. Since knowing nature is to

understand God's language and since this involves grasping of meanings, comprehension of meanings may vary between individuals and society and hence Hamann is opposed to any doctrinal religion which in his case was Christianity. Secondly, the various kinds of resistance to modernity in general and Enlightenment in particular ended up in romanticism and obscurantism couched in mystical and transcendentalist vocabulary. Hamann steered clear of such trends. For him, the spiritual concerns here and now. What scholars like Berlin call 'secular' element in Hamann concerns Hamann's endeavor to garner support, to quote Berlin: "not so much in the theological or metaphysical axioms or dogmas or a priori arguments, which the Enlightenment, with some justification, thought that it had discredited as methods of argument, as in his own day-to-day experience, in the empirically – no intuitively – perceived facts themselves, in direct observation of men and their conduct, and in direct introspection of his own passions, feelings, thoughts, way of life." (*ibid*:273) The use of 'secular' by scholars like Berlin, though might sound somewhat infelicitous, serves to emphases the important point that while Hamann's critique of modern epistemology and hence knowledge system of modernity is religious, it is religious in a very special and even unique way which lays premium on not sophisticated doctrines but on our authentic experience of the presence of God and his relation to us existentially. This point facilitates our discussion of Kierkegaard below.

III. 2. Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard's religious critique of modernity has as its major plank a sustained attack on the central pillar of modernity, namely, reason or rationality. The attack on rationality is one of the hallmarks of existentialism of which Kierkegaard is

taken to be the progenitor, at least of the theistic version. He takes cudgels against what was considered to be the highest achievements of the Age of Reason ranging from science to democracy (including its socialist version) which were considered to be the most rational way of managing human affairs. Above all, he specifically attacks the philosophical system of Hegel whose rationalist content was brought out by the Hegelian dictum: "The Rational is Real and the Real is Rational" by which Hegel sought to provide an ontological locus to what was considered to be an epistemic mode of thinking. Kierkegaard sought to dethrone reason to make way for a theistic conception of self and the world that goes beyond Christianity as understood in both conventional and scholastic traditions.

We may begin our discussion of Kierkegaard's response to modernity by noting the way he configured the predicament of modernity in his times. According to him, the modern age "is suffering from lack of passion". This characterization of modern age may look quite akin to Alexis de Tocqueville's description of 19th century modern society in terms of "petits et vulgaires plaisirs" (petty and vulgar pleasures) relentlessly pursued by people in modern democratic society. It may also quite proximate to Nietzsche's idea of "last man" who lived at the lowest depth of decline and had no aspirations left except "pitiable comfort" offered by modern society. Tocqueville and Nietzsche seem to highlight in their critique of modernist philistinism that has infested the life-view of modernity. However, Kierkegaard's claim that age of modernity suffers from lack of passion goes beyond the charges of philistinism. As we have seen, modernity, as a mode of thinking, survives on certain invidious distinctions/dichotomies. The subject /object distinction is central to modernity. But equally important distinctions are the ones between reason/thought and passion/feeling. Reason/thought is the essence of human nature and passion/feeling is its negation. This dichotomy was

grounded in the dichotomy between mind and body. Since man with reason as his essence is mind, reason was associated with mind and passions/feelings were naturally associated with body. In fact, it was even thought that man embodied reason whereas woman embodied passions. And hence woman needs to be controlled by man since reason ought to control passions. What is significant in Kierkegaard is that he indicts modernity for having given rise to a life without passion. He, thus, valorizes passion which is completely devalued by modernist thought.

The very questions and issues Kierkegaard grapples with and highlights as central to his age lie completely outside the horizons of modernist conception/s of human nature. Central to Kierkegaard's concerns "are issues of selfhood, our identity and well-being, our moral and social life, existential issues and religious visions" (Mehl, Peter, *Thinking through Kierkegaard*, 2005:2) These issues never figured in relation to the various conceptions of man germane to modernity. The conception of a pure subject has no concern for what was taken to be non-cognitive dimensions of human experience which fall outside the bound of rational discourse. The materialist conception of man propounded by the Enlightenment thinkers did not face any existential issues since for them man is essentially an object of scientific investigation as any natural phenomenon is. The moral domain was confined to utilitarian framework whereas aesthetics and even religious domains were taken to be only of emotive significance. No doubt, Kant initiated an attempt to go beyond such conceptions of human nature by locating man-in-himself in the domain of the noumenon. The self-in-itself became in his hand a transcendental reality. Further, he did not confine the self to the transcendental realm necessary for the possibility of empirical knowledge. The self was also the locus of non-empirical experience. But Kant's conception of human self was

inadequate from the point of view of the philosopher like Kierkegaard. First of all, the non-empirical experience is also or in some way cognitive, at least in a broad sense. Thus, self was construed by Kant in exclusively cognitive terms. Secondly, the transcendental status of the human self makes it, in important sense, remote to the central human concerns. Both these points render Kant's conception of human self irrelevant to what Kierkegaard considered the existential concerns of man which are not just epistemic and not just transcendental.

Of course, Kant was working primarily within the framework of modernist ethos even while rectifying it and rendering it more open-ended than what he inherited as. This was not so with the Expressivist philosophers like Herder. Expressivists rejected the philosophical doctrines of modernity lock, stock and barrel, particularly modernity's philosophical anthropology. However, the Expressivists sought to demonstrate the hollowness of the modernist idea of man as a self-defining subject with his essence in rationality as a capacity to understand the workings of nature which needs to be controlled thus rendering science as the highest achievement of man's creative powers. In the place of such an anthropology, they sought to install the idea of man as a being who expresses himself through his communion with nature. Thus, man's unique capacity lies not in reasoning but in intuition and hence, the highest achievement of human creativity was not science but poetry. However, whatever be the value of expressivism as an antidote to the narrowness of the modernist canvas, the Expressivist view of man did not make room for a wholesome grounding of the existential concerns which go beyond the aesthetic.

Hegel's picture of human subjectivity which sought to combine rational autonomy of man in the Kantian scheme and the expressive unity of man with nature in the Expressivist scheme of Herder had nothing to do with the existential challenge as

Kierkegaard understood it. After all, the challenge of our times was to resolve the contradictions such as the ones between the subject and the object, reason and passion/passion, the individual and the collective, knowledge and faith etc.,. These contradictions, according to Hegel, can be resolved by and only by realizing that we are vehicles of the Spirit which realizes itself as an Absolute, overcoming the dichotomies in the long history of its journey. For Kierkegaard, our existential predicament is not imply one of contradictions and the Spirit overcoming its condition has nothing to do with our central concerns which cannot be captured by means of mere logic, dialectical or otherwise.

Hence, Kierkegaard had to completely depart from the set of conceptions of human nature put forth by his predecessors. His own conception of human nature, therefore, turns out to be the most radical departure from what he inherited. Central to this conception was his vision of existential identity which "is different from mere psychological identity in that it explicitly addresses moral and religious matters; issues of ethical evaluation and life-purposes are self-consciously affirmed." (Mehl, Peter J. 2005:3) Kierkegaard is in search for "an ultimately believable framework" in and through which "we make sense of our life spiritually" (Taylor, Charles, 1989:17-18) Kierkegaard may not be the first to reflect upon the moral and spiritual issues but he was the first to render them existential. In placing our human concerns within the framework of existential identity, he has not given a mere psychological account of human nature. This is because the framework has an explicit normative dimension in the sense that such a framework brings to surface what constitutes a life of fulfillment. In short, our vision of our identity in order to be existential should specify what we are and what we ought to be simultaneously since the former without the latter gives us only an anthropological, however philosophically garnished, account of man and the latter

without the former provides an ideal from outside. Both the descriptive and the normative understandings of the human condition are needed for making sense of our life, the most palpable challenge facing man.

The core of Kierkegaardian framework is spiritual despair. Again, the very idea of spiritual despair is not something that fits modern thought with its exuberance towards the idea of progress which was thought to be in the process of realization. What does Kierkegaard mean by spiritual despair which is ill at ease with modernity's celebration of its cognitive achievements? The answer to this question presupposes an understanding of what Kierkegaard calls 'ideal of personhood', thereby implying that I am a person and not mere subject, let alone an object; I am not a transcendental or nominal entity; I am not even the vehicle of the Absolute. No doubt, Kierkegaard speaks of our becoming subjective but that is precisely to become an integrated being, that is, "An actual human being, composed of the infinite and the finite and infinitely interested in existing, has his actuality precisely in holding these together." (quoted in Mehl, 2005:4) The concept of a person which Kierkegaard uses as the central category of his ontology enables him to ward off the mind/body problem so central to modern philosophy till date. Personhood for him is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. The Christian notion of salvation concerns the attaining of personhood which Kierkegaard expresses by the phrase "becoming subjective". This is an extremely significant point because, on the one hand, it valorizes subjectivity against the valorization of the object for the sake of the epistemological ideal of objective knowledge. On the other hand, for modern thought subject exists as a being. It is a being and not becoming, whereas Kierkegaard's notion of becoming subject renders it something more than an epistemic agent. Equally important, the person to whom Kierkegaard applies the locution 'self" is neither empirical nor transcendental in the Kantian sense. It is not

empirical because it is situated in moral and religious space and it is not transcendental and hence cannot be pushed to the domain of the unknowable.

Kierkegaard departs from the modern notion of subjectivity going even further by invoking the concept of Spirit in connection with his idea of person. The concept connotes not simply consciousness or self-consciousness or an agent exercising the moral will. No doubt, it is all this, yet, its essence consists in establishing a responsible relation with life as a whole, geared towards wholeness and integrity. It is more than self-consciousness because it is radically self-transcending. As Mehl points out "this spirit or "I" is what some philosophers deny exists at all." (2005:5).

It is this idea of personhood as spirit that enables him to work out a vision of human life in terms of hierarchy of existence or stages of life. The first stage is aesthetic, the second is ethical and the third is religious/spiritual the Christian version of which is the highest. It may be noted that he places the religious/spiritual as distinct and even superior to the ethical. This contrasts with Kant's idea that the moral law produces in us a sense of awe and his conception of *holy* beings in terms of apprehending the moral law as categorical non-imperative or declarative i.e. the holy beings of Kant do not suffer from the conflict between desire and duty unlike us. More than that, the holy beings for Kant are only hypothetical entities and this is not so for Kierkegaard. It is equally important to note that the stages are not discontinuous. "Each stage is more comprehensive than the previous, encompassing it in a higher, more adequate form." (ibid:5)

We now come to the core ideas of Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology that seeks to set at naught the very idea of human subjectivity which persisted from Descartes till his own time. According to him, humanness is constituted by two basic poles: one pole concerns our internal perspective within our finite life and

other our capacity to see our world including ourselves from the outside, by objectifying it. These polarities determine the dynamics of our life. Coordinating these polarities is the formidable task. But without such a coordination it is impossible to achieve selfhood, that is, to realize personhood. It may be noted here that, unlike in the modernist philosophical anthropology, selfhood and personhood are not given but are to be achieved by the most difficult project of coordinating polarities, failure to achieve which means failure to realize personhood or selfhood. And this is what Kierkegaard calls 'despair'. In the words of Alastair Hannay, "despair in Kierkegaard … is unwillingness to live up to an expectation of selfhood." (quoted in *ibid*:6) It is a spiritually deprived existence and failure to recover existential identity. "Insomuch as selfhood refers to a high ideal of spiritual integration, so despair refers to the state of individual who is unable to realize himself as a Kierkegaardian self." (*ibid*:6) Intensely experiencing the despair is the authentic state. Pretending not to experience this despair is one of the facets of inauthenticity as Kierkegaard conceives it.

It is obvious that the concept of despair and its cognate concept of authenticity are completely alien to modern philosophy of man and human life. But it may be asked whether Marx, and before him Hegel, did worked out their theory of alienation and whether Kierkegaard's idea of despair is quite akin to it. Hegel's idea of alienation is construed in terms of such a highly abstract philosophical cosmology that it is far from Kierkegaard's idea of despair so centrally located in human life as it is lived here and now. After all, alienation for Hegel is the condition of the Spirit in so far as it deems its body, namely, the world, as the other only to realize that it is *its* other, thus overcoming alienation. Thus, human being's condition of alienation is a reflection of the Spirit's condition before it realizes itself as Absolute. It was, therefore, quite natural for Marx to separate Hegel's rich concept of alienation

from the mystical shell of his cosmology. Marx provided the concept of alienation with a material content by considering alienation to be a social condition and hence the problem of alienation demands only a social solution. This was in contrast to the great poets, mystics and theologians who acutely felt alienation and poignantly described their condition of not feeling at home in the world and being an outsider and stranger. For them, therefore, alienation was a spiritual condition and the problem of alienation demanded a spiritual solution. The difference between Marx's notion of alienation and his notion of false consciousness and Kierkegaard's notion of despair and inauthenticity is too palpable to be pointed out. But the difference between Kierkegaard's notion of despair and the alienation articulated by mystics and poets is equally deep. For the latter, alienation was a spiritual condition but for Kierkegaard despair was a spiritual condition precisely because it was an existential condition. Hence, unlike them, he worked out a theory of human nature and vision that follows from it so as to bring out the existential basis of the spiritual condition of despair and spiritual achievement of overcoming it.

Finally, Kierkegaard radically departed from modernist confidence in a common human nature anchored in reason. It may be noted that the pre-modern view of man construed human nature in a way that was culture-constituted, that is, two human beings belonging to different cultural milieu are two different kinds of human beings and same only in the abstract sense of being creations of the same God. Against such a conception of human nature modernity brought in the idea of common human nature which was culturally neutral. But at the early period of the modern age it was difficult to identify what that common human nature consisted in. Kant, being a modernist himself, came to the rescue of modernity by identifying that common human nature in terms of: (a) a categorial framework

without which empirical knowledge is impossible; (b) reason as the locus of categorical imperative; and (c) as the basis of universal delight which a work of art provides. No doubt, the modernist confidence in the common human nature had become weak in the early 19th century. It became even more vulnerable with the reaction of Expressivist philosophers for whom each individual is unique as an expressive being. Further "the romantic reaction in the early 19th century … [was] to put the responsibility for charting a moral and spiritual course on the shoulders of each individual." (*ibid*:120) In this connection Mehl quotes Iris Murdoch who sums up the romantic view in the following words: "Human life has no external point or *telos* … There are properly many patterns or purposes within life, but there is no general and as it were generally guaranteed pattern or purpose of the kind for which philosophers and theologians used to search. We are what we seem to be, transient, mortal creatures subject to necessity and chance." (quoted in *ibid*:120) If so, " The question then becomes of making a new case for the moral and religious life as traditionally conceived, for a notion of the human *telos*, or finding one's own path forward through the thicket of existential options." (quoted in *ibid*:120-121) Such a concern which Kierkegaard shared and deeply felt takes him away from modernity. More so is the option he finds for himself in connection with that concern. He finds option in Christianity, thereby, distancing himself from modernity which was anti-religious or non-religious in the sense of being religion neutral. However, the kind of Christianity he sought for had nothing to do with institutionalized Christianity which modernity could tame. It was highly personalized religion. For him, "What matters is to find my purpose, to see what it is that God wills that I shall do; the crucial thing is to find a truth that is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to love and die*… Of what use would it be for me to be able to formulate the meaning of Christianity, to be able to explain many specific points – if it had no deeper meaning *for me, and for my life*?"

(quoted in *ibid*:121) The demand which Kierkegaard makes on Christianity makes his own version of Christianity entirely at odds with not only Christianity as a corporate body but even the mystical tradition of Christianity. After all, the mystical tradition hardly leaves place for individual who is not consumed by an all-powerful vision. At the same time, Kierkegaard's Christianized individual provides the vantage point from which we can understand the highly impoverished individual of modernity. The very idea of realizing one's existential identity by means of a search for meaning for one's life through an inward path leading to Christianity as never understood before, enabled Kierkegaard to show the limits, rather, limitations of both modernity as a tradition and traditional Christianity. In short, the crux of his religious critique of modernity goes hand in hand with his attempt to provide a central place to religion; but in doing so, he invests religion with a new meaning which is anything but institutional. It involves what Charles Taylor calls in connection with Kierkegaard's religious vision "transfiguration", that is, a "transformation which depends on a new stance towards oneself, overcoming despair and dread." (1989:450-51)

This brings us to the end of this chapter where we sought to understand what in the western Christian tradition turns out to be a religious critique of modernity. Such a narrative helps us to desplay the full significance, by way of juxtaposition, the religious critique of modernity provided by Tolstoy and Gandhi which is theme of next two chapters.

Chapter IV. Tolstoy's Critique of Modernity

> "What there was, was mostly imported from abroad – scarcely one single political or social idea to be found in Russia in the 19th century was born on native soil. Perhaps Tolstoy's idea of non-resistance was something genuinely Russian – a restatement of a Christian position so original that it had the force of a new idea when he preached it". Isaiah Berlin

From one point of view Tolstoy's critique of modernity is clearly expressed by him and it touches upon religious, political and economic aspects of modern life. From another point of view, his reasoning and argumentations have been changing every time, even though the core ideas constituting his framework never changed. It shows that he examined every nook and corner of modern life with a torch of his powerful reflection leaving none of them unanalyzed. That is why it turns to be a difficult task to extract the core of his critique in a concise manner. Each argument of this great thinker originates from an acute analysis of life as he saw it and represents a universally comprehensible truth of an indispensable value. Defenders of modernity have always considered critics of modernity to be reactionary. This is more so in the case of Tolstoy, thanks to the radical nature of his attack on modernity which leaves nothing untouched.

His critique of church and state is full of sincerity bordering on despair. Passionate critique, fervent sympathy for one hundred millions of Russian people, enslaved by the fraud of church and state, at times stir up in the heart of a reader a solemn

desire to use revolutionary power against reactionary violence. Plekhanov was right in saying that Tolstoy "advises not to go beyond the weapon of critique, but those wonderful pages of his undoubtedly justify the harshest critique by means of weapon". (1958:637, my translation)

Tolstoy's critique of modern life was an outcome of his moral crisis which occurred in the beginning of 1870s. In his sincere urge for and striving towards moral perfection he came to a complete rejection of all presently established forms of civil, social and religious life.

In his non-literary works written during post-crisis period Tolstoy exposes the most morbid aspects of modernity. The book *Kingdom of God is Within You* is a deafening and powerful indictment of the church and state. It was called by the Russian censorship "the most adverse book ever published" and by Repin "a thing of horrifying power". During the work on this book Tolstoy writes in his diary: "I want to tell the whole truth as I sensed it, to tell sincerely like before God" (Tolstoy, Leo,1952b:84, my translation). Tolstoy's parallel attack on Church and State in his indictment of modernity might seem surprising to some for whom Church was not always sympathetic to the State. They expected that Tolstoy should aim singularly at State which is the main vehicle of ushering in of modernity in Russia. But Tolstoy was convinced that Church can be and has been co-opted by the State in facilitating modernity of which the modern state was a palpable creation. Even when Church stood against modernity on the plank of religion it promoted an idea of religion which was a radical distortion of what Tolstoy considered to be genuine spirituality. The Church, thus, promoted modernity by making State its vehicle in a way more cognitively and ethically credible than what state itself could do by itself in establishing modernity. Hence, there is a deep philosophical point in Tolstoy's twin attack on the Church and the

State with the result that two attacks were two faces of the same coin. To be precise, Tolstoy comes back to the critique of church and state again and again. Almost every book and article carries out a detailed examination of these burning actualities of the times from different perspectives. At the outset it may be said with confidence that Tolstoy's response to modernity is one of a critique. This is evidenced by the fact that he did not alter his stance towards modernity. In his critique Tolstoy was unshakeable. He did not compromise his views to please anyone. In fact he lived his critique. But such a characterization of his response to modernity does not lessen the richness of his response. It must be noted that when one speaks of critique in connection with Tolstoy's response to modernity one must bear in mind its radical nature. The word 'critique' is used in two senses: in a milder sense it connotes "showing the limits of", a sense in which we use the word in connection with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and so on. It is this milder use which is largely prevalent in philosophical discourse. However, a radical use of the term "critique" connotes an almost complete rejection of what is critiqued and to provide an alternative to what is critiqued. Though the latter use is not as conventional as the former it does justice to the character of the critiques of modernity offered by Tolstoy and Gandhi – the foci of this thesis.

Tolstoy's ideas were often considered as reactionary and utopian. But, at the same time, Lenin and Plekhanov found in them some progressive elements since they contained democratic aspirations. Lenin called him "The Mirror of Russian revolution" and Plekhanov said that Tolstoy critiqued ruling classes "almost like a socialist". But most of the thinkers agreed that he preached anarchy. However, it is quite obvious that he had a vision of society where there was no use of coercion, violence, force and authority not visualized by any ideological stream of modern thought, capitalist or socialist, liberal or radial.

One of the important claims of this chapter is that Tolstoy while appearing to be grounding himself firmly in traditionally recognized eternal principles of morality and totally rejecting modernity anticipated a giant leap of humanity towards a new Christian Era which was akin to a new epoch envisaged by Indian sages like Aurobindo. However, unlike the latter, Tolstoy provided his conception of the new epoch with a "this-worldly" dimension at its core since, for him, the Kingdom of God can be established on earth. Tolstoy's central aim appears to be a complete juxtaposition of a genuinely Christian future with a kind of society envisaged by modernity with its watchword of progress which, according to Tolstoy, is a negation of moral progress. We should always keep in mind Tolstoy's goal and its rejection of modernist *telos* in his overall picture though he does deal with specific institutions of modern society in his critique.

IV.1. Historical and Intellectual Context

Before we proceed further a few words about the historical and intellectual contexts within which Tolstoy engaged in his critique of modernity are in order. Russian philosophical thought of 19th century cannot be separated from social and political context of the times. It is an admitted fact that philosophy as such came to Russia comparatively late and moreover was under a strict surveillance of the government and was in exile during seven darkest years of Russian obscurantism. Isaiah Berlin considers Russian thinkers of the 19th century as "a phenomenon *sui generis*". Russian thought was shaped by a most unusual cross-influence of ideas and concepts predominately borrowed from the West but interpreted in a specifically Russian way. At the same time Russian intelligentsia tended to rediscover their own native traditions. Another point which needs to be emphasized is that almost all Russian thinkers of the 19th century were writers and this itself is an outstanding phenomenon.

The 19th century Russia is marked with "a rapid modernization of a great nation compressed into a short span of time", and hence, with "a curious coexistence of archaic and modern elements in the social structure and way of thinking". (Walicki, Andrzej, 1988:xiv) To this must be added a typically Russian tendency to uncompromising ideological commitment and the habit of taking ideas and concepts to their extreme. The passionate search for ethical ideals directed Russian thinkers towards understanding of what many Russian thinkers called "the accursed questions" which they faced.

According to Berlin, Russian thinkers of the 19th century were strongly predisposed to both types of world vision: the monist and the pluralist. A monistic world view usually squares with a period of intellectual and social stability and even stagnation, whereas a pluralistic world view goes well with a period of dynamism and even crisis brought about by forces of destabilization. Due to various reasons, the 19th century Russia was in the twilight zone between stability and change. Hence, both monistic and pluralistic world views and societal thought existed and operated with equal force. As Berlin points out, "the most sensitive among them suffered simultaneously, and equally acutely, from historical claustrophobia and from agoraphobia. The result was a remarkably concentrated self-searching which in many cases produced prophetic insights into the great problems of our own times." (1978: xvii)

It is to be noted that positive ideas of Tolstoy were developed in the context of the darkest period in Russian history. Tsarist Russia of those times was "the arch-enemy of freedom and Enlightenment, the reservoir of darkness, cruelty and oppression,… the sinister power, served by innumerable spies and informers, whose hidden hand was discovered in every political development unfavourable to the growth of national or individual liberty". (Berlin, I., 1978:11) Response to

Tsarist regime as well as to modern tendencies was rich in its variety. It encompassed liberals, populists, socialists, reactionary nationalists, Slavophils, radicals and revolutionaries. Hence, Tolstoy's intellectual context was multicolored. Tolstoy did not belong to any one of these ideological streams, even though his ideas were not unique: "they have something in common with the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth century; something with those of the twentieth century; little with those of his own times." (*ibid*:239) Radicals and Slavophils, that is, Werstenizers/Westernists and Nativists constitute two axes in Russian philosophical thought in the 19th century. Like radicals, Tolstoy condemned economic exploitation, arbitrary violence and all that creates inequality among men. But the rest of the 'westernizing' outlook with its democracy, patriotism, secularism, material progress, natural science, he rejected with both hands. In his rejection of ideology of radicals Tolstoy might have consented with Dostoevsky who called them "devils" that lead Russia to "blind self-destruction, dragging their country, and subsequently much of the rest of the world, after them'. (*ibid*:xiii) Thus, Belinsky, considered as radical democrat (Westernizer), completely rejected whatever was connected to common people and popular traditions. He propelled the idea that people have to be raised to the level of society (educated elite) and not society to be forced back to the level of the people, which was the Slavophiles' remedy. (cf. Walicki, Andrzej, 1988:137) Right before his death Belinsky wrote to Annenkov: "…the process of internal civic development will begin in Russia only when our gentry become transformed into a bourgeoisie." (1940b:448-449) Bourgeoisie was considered as a historical necessity before Russia could come to socialism, thanks to Russia's backwardness and the inertness of Russian peasantry. Radical and liberal westernizers did not differ much in their ideas, except for the role of the state. According to Kavelin, a liberal westernist, "the emergence of the centralized Muscovite state …was the decisive moment in

the rationalization of social relations in Russia, and therefore also in the emancipation of the personality from the fetters of traditionalism." (Walicki, Andrzej, 1988:149-50) Tolstoy felt quite at home with Slavophils only because they believed in the primacy of spiritual values and were in contact with peasants and traditional ways of life. Moreover, neither Slavophils nor Tolstoy believed that science can further personal development and creativity. But he could not accept their beliefs in Orthodox Church and nationalist monarchy which he strongly condemned. The fact is that Slavophils while considering village commune as an ideal social unit, did not subscribe to individual freedom within community. Freedom was confined to the "land" by which they meant a community or collective. They did not accept plurality of beliefs and oppositions by minority within society. As for the state, Slavophils drew a distinction between state in Russia and state in Europe, by saying that "in Russia the state had not been raised to the "principle" on which social organization was largely founded. … Relations between "land" (common people) and the state rested upon the principle of mutual noninterference." (*ibid*:97) Aksakov called it "Russian freedom" which was "freedom from politics" as opposed to republican liberty, i.e. "political freedom, which presupposed the people's active participation in political affairs." (*ibid*:96) It is evident that such traditional formulation of freedom and state – "land" relationship could not satisfy Tolstoy. Above all, Slavophils' and Tolstoy's views diverged drastically when it came to the use of reason. Slavophils claimed that true knowledge could only be obtained by an "imaginative self-identification with the central principle of the universe – the soul of the world. Some of the Slavophils identified it with the revealed truths of Orthodox religion and the mystical tradition of the Russian Church. Tolstoy stood at the opposite pole of all this. He believed that only by patient empirical observation could any knowledge be obtained; that this knowledge is always inadequate, that simple people often know the truth better

than learned men, because their observation of men and nature is less clouded with empty theories, and not because they are inspired vehicles of divine afflatus." (Berlin, I., 1978:54-55) This standpoint of Tolstoy is a key factor of his own reflections. His philosophy and views were derived from observation of real life, people, culture, history of his and ancient times, and this gave him irrefutable proofs and grounds for his conclusions.

His clear, cold, uncompromising realism, rejection of both traditional and modern institutions, coupled with valorization of the ethical, place Tolstoy outside all prevalent ideological streams. Tolstoy's close affinity with Rousseau and the great thinkers of the Enlightenment is widely recognized. "Like them he looked for values not in history, nor in the sacred missions of nations or cultures or churches, but in the individual's own personal experience." (*ibid*:241)

Tolstoy's message to his followers may bring more light to our understanding of Tolstoy's attitude towards any kind of collective movements or isms: "Unity is only possible in Truth, and in order to achieve it, one thing is required: to search it (Truth) constantly, with persistent spiritual effort. To get together will not help to know the Truth. … Moreover, who with whom should get together in the search of unity? And who to whom should help materially and spiritually? Where is that stamp by means of which we recognize "ours"? Isn't it a sin to discriminate between yourself, others and the rest? Isn't it the unity with a dozen a disunity with thousands and millions?" (1953:241-42, my translation) For Tolstoy genuine unity of men and genuine knowledge come from solitary work before God.

Tolstoy's critique of modernity is traceable to three main works of his which encompass Tolstoy's philosophy and ideas in their totality. *What Then Must We Do?* is an economic examination of causes of poverty through the ages. Religious

and moral problems of modern society Tolstoy sifts scrupulously trough the sieve of his analysis in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. The core of this work deals with his theory of non-resistance to evil, which he now applies to governments. The work *What is Art?* carries out a detailed study of the role of art in the societal life. Even though Tolstoy's views on Art are anchored in his religious world view, they constitute the *leit motif* of his critique of modernity as a whole. Though my exploration of Tolstoy's critique of modernity mainly focuses on the works mentioned above I occasionally refer to his other works.

It should be emphasized that in his critique of modernity Tolstoy always makes references to the past of humanity. He looks at its present from the historical perspective and explains why suffering of people has reached its extreme in modern times. It is significant that economic dimension of his critique of modernity goes hand in hand with his mainly spiritual orientation. Whereas the defenders of modernity consider modern economy to be unleashing the forces that can bring about material prosperity, Tolstoy portrays modern economy as a phenomenon of large scale misery.

IV.2. Tolstoy's World View and Ethics

Before proceeding further it is necessary to mention Tolstoy's world view and its concomitant conception of morality. Tolstoy's world view stands outside both its pre-modern and modern counterparts. This is because he neither subordinates man to nature nor does he divide them into subject and object. Man and nature bear much more extended dimension for Tolstoy. Though being an opponent of metaphysics, his view on man and nature is quite metaphysical to its core. To express in Kant's terminology both of them exist as phenomenon and noumenon.

The first one Tolstoy ascribes to the spatiotemporal context and calls it "false life", the second is beyond space and time and is "real life". What keeps them together, or to express better, what helps to differentiate between them is reason. Typically modernist view of reason is instrumentalist. Kant and Hegel provided a very broad content to reason, whereas expressivistic critics of modernity rejected reason/rationality. Tolstoy's view is different from all this. In fact, it is different even from pre-modernist concept of reason, which is mere contemplation of meaningful order of nature. Among all views on reason, Tolstoy's is more close to the Kantian. Tolstoy read Kant's work *Critique of Practical Reason* quite late in his life and regretted that he had not done it twenty years earlier when he encountered this work for the first time. Accepting Kant's 'Practical reason' in its entirety, nevertheless, Tolstoy attaches exclusive importance to only two ideas adumbrated by Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*: the "Thing in Itself" and the subjective character of time and space. "Thing in Itself" Tolstoy considered to be known to all religions and to be expressed by them more clearly and more simply than Kant did. It is directly associated with notion of Life which is that basic concept from which all other concepts are derived. Hence, life, according to Tolstoy, cannot be defined and known by reason of man, and yet the latter has an *a priori* idea about it. Time and space do not exist for Tolstoy. They are required only to place and understand material objects. Real life exists beyond space and time and that is why it cannot be known but realized by man's striving towards wellbeing that can be achieved by submission of personality to the law of reason. As a result Tolstoy gives higher status to Kant's P*ractical reason* than to *Theoretical* because the former while being firmly grounded in universal moral law is able to apprehend objective reality. Furthermore, Tolstoy finds the approval of his own dichotomy between "false" and "real" Life in Kant's division of world of Nature and world of Freedom. Tolstoy states that man exist in both lives, in the

false one which is limited by time and space he is determined by material existence and therefore is not free, whereas in real life which is beyond space and time he, as being a rational being, is absolutely free from his animal nature and from the world of senses. Thus, due to his reason and free will man stands out as autonomous moral agent who submits his actions to the law of reason which Kant calls universal moral law. The basic tenets of this law, according to Tolstoy, cannot be inculcated by any one for they are a priori given to man with reason. (cf. Bulgakov, V., 1994, ch.3, part 2). And further he continues: "…reason is that law, in accordance with which, rational beings, i.e. men, inevitably ought to live" (*ibid*). Tolstoy deliberately emphasizes the word 'ought' for its perfectionist aspect of motive to act morally. But he thinks that except deontological means to obey the moral law, man has multiple ways of moral manifestation and one among them, in fact, more perfect way, is Love. If duty demands to accord one's conduct with position of other people, "love directly leads him to give away his existence for the benefit of other beings" (Tolstoy, 2006:649, my translation) Thus, Tolstoy's ethics is based on the absolute priority of love which gives a genuine standard to human conducts towards others without exception. By introducing Love as a regulative principle of moral conduct Tolstoy overcomes compulsion and formality of Kant's deontological theory of morality. As it is demonstrated, ethical positions of the German philosopher and the Russian thinker are quite similar in their basic principle and both of them attempted to provide a rational basis for morality so as to purify moral law from magical elements. By invoking the idea of Love Tolstoy however goes beyond reason whereas Kant stops there by making reason the locus of the moral law. This difference is philosophically important. Some critics of Kant have pointed out that in Kant's hands morality becomes cold because according to him my action towards others can be morally right even if I do not love them provided I act for the sake of duty. That is, whether I love the other person or not is

irrelevant to the moral rightness of my action. Tolstoy might agree with those critics. In fact he was the first person to point out this lacuna in Kant's moral theory. What is to be noted as extremely significant is the way Tolstoy utilizes Kant as an entry point but undermines it from within. Partially adopting Kant's terminology he effectively makes room for, on the one hand, Love which has hardly any place in the rationalist scheme of Kant and, on the other hand, God, love for whom should animate our love for fellow beings since for Tolstoy "without Love towards God the concept of humanity is an empty concept". It must be noted that in Kant's scheme the concept of God is not constitutive of our moral life but only has a regulative role. What distinguishes Tolstoy's position and enables it to transcend the best version of moral theory modernity could provide is the link Tolstoy establishes between reality, life, freedom, love and, most importantly, God. If you drop any one concept the whole scheme falls and hence the relation is integral. Further, as we have seen, unlike in Tolstoy's moral philosophy, Kant's ethical scheme does not have any place for Love, let alone Love for God. The moral law/the categorical imperative does, no doubt, arouse a feeling in us but that feeling is one of awe/respect and not Love.

However akin to Kant's characterization of the Modern Age, that is, the Era of Enlightenment, as "man's release from self-incurred tutelage" meaning by this man's "lack of resolution and courage to use reason without direction from another" (1986:263), Tolstoy calls the New Era "inception of real life in man", that means that the true life has been revealed to man through his reason. Tolstoy refers to Kant in this connection for two reasons: first because of Tolstoy's personal attitude towards Kant, and second, Kant's internal but sophisticated critique of modernity.

Tolstoy considered that the genuine science is that whose main objective is to collect knowledge of human history on the questions of morality, namely, 'What is good and what is bad?', 'How to live a good life?', 'How to make all men equal and could equally use the land?', ' How to avoid wars and violence?', 'How to educate children well?' What is significant here is that Tolstoy invokes the concept of science and emphasizes a careful study of facts in arriving at adequate answers to the questions in the moral domain. This might sound strange because one expects that a critique of modernity like him not to extend the reach of science to the ethical domain. Is he not declaring his belief in the omnipotence of science like a modernist? But it must be noted that it is the central figures of modernity like Hume and his empiricist successors that kept the realm of ethics and the realm of facts completely separate in view of their conviction that 'ought' cannot be derived from 'is'. Added to this is the fact/value dichotomy which is not only Humean but also Kantian or at least Neo-Kantian. By what appears to be his valorization of science which apparently brings him close to modernity Tolstoy, in fact, radically deviates from modernity on the question of the source of our ethical ideas.

The history of moral consciousness has three levels: first, the level of instincts, second that of custom and third the level of conscience. At the first level whatever is dictated by instinct was considered good. On the second, society or religion directs the moral choice. At the third level, conscience becomes an arbiter between right and wrong and this level is reached by a society which is individualistic. At this level the moral choice cannot be freely guided by individual conscience alone. This is because what one individual' s conscience says may be different from and even opposed to what another individual conscience might say on a specific issue. Secondly, what one thinks to be his voice of conscience may be only the voice of his self-interest. Hence, there should be some standard to decide what is right and

what is wrong. The dominant standard in modern moral theory is utility. How does Tolstoy distance himself from this?

Tolstoy while talking about man's relationship to the world, which in his understanding is religion, points out three types of relationship: 1. primitive or personal; 2. pagan or societal; 3. Christian or divine. The first one is the most ancient relationship which stands on the lowest level of development wherein a person strives to achieve maximum welfare and happiness for himself irrespective of the suffering of other people. The second type of relationship concerns only the idea that the main purpose of life is the welfare and happiness of a particular group of people (family, state, community and even the whole of humanity). From this type of relationship spring all kind of religions. The third type of man's relationship to the world is the most mature and it consists in service of the Divine will which sent us to the world. Our relationship to the world through the Divine is the highest kind of knowledge which is present in the core of all religions.

"If religion is man's relationship to the world which determines his meaning of life, then morality is explanation and direction of that human activity which naturally springs out of this or that (one or another) man's relationship to the world." (Tolstoy, L., 1956:16, my translation) Morality, according to Tolstoy, is inherent to religion. Religion is an answer to the question 'What is the meaning of my life?' And this answer bears a certain moral requirement to the corresponding human behavior. The relevance of all this to Tolstoy's critique of modernity is the way he brings in an intimate relation between religion and morality. On the one hand, he rejects Utilitarianism, the official theory of modernity, on the other hand, he is sympathetic to Kant's duty-centered ethics which is not the dominant theory of modernity. However, he seeks to transcend Kantian ethics by bringing in the concept of Love understood in a religious sense. But this religious sense has

nothing to do with a confessional denomination. Thus, against the main stream of modern moral theory he brings back the link between religion and morality – the link which was considered either irrelevant or debilitating for genuine morality, according to modern ethics. Tolstoy's reverting to pre-modern conception of the religion-based morality is only apparent and not real. For, Tolstoy did not link morality with Christian religion propounded by the Church, but religion as such, that is, a thread which runs through all religions. In fact, Tolstoy took more care in delinking morality from Christianity of the Church than taking morality out of the framework of modern ethical theory. This original way of habilitating morality within universal spiritual consciousness rather than Christian Orthodoxy is to be traced to his negative view of the Church, irrespective of its relation to the institutions nourished by modernity.

IV.3. Tolstoy's Critique of Church

Consistency in Tolstoy's writings is as difficult to trace as in his life itself. Nevertheless, the whole structure of Tolstoy's philosophy is firmly grounded and established on five commandments which he maintained to be the true utterances of Christ. Set down in brief form they are: do not be angry; do not lust; do not bind yourself by oaths; resist not him who is evil; be good to the just and unjust. All of Tolstoy's teaching, as well as his own conduct, were guided by these commandments. It is on the background of these commandments that he subjects the various pillars of modern social organization to a comprehensive examination. The first and foremost of those pillars is the institution of Church. And in doing so, he makes his position *vis-à-vis* secularism very clear. As we see below, he sharply differentiates between religion and church in a way modernity does not. Keeping in

mind that modernity works out its conception of secularism by domesticating church and marginalizing religion, let us see how Tolstoy steers clear of both secularism and church-centered religiosity. Obviously, his indictment of religious institutions rests on the grounds different from those of his modernist counterparts. The secularization of the world picture went hand in hand with the convictions in the scientific explanations of the natural phenomena. Hence, it was thought that there was no more reason to rely on God on matters of day-to-day life and that the disappearance of the unknowable from the realm of human thought undermines our dependence on religion. According to Tolstoy, man' s dependence on religion has nothing to do with our acknowledgement of unknowable as modernists think, rather it is grounded in our inner realization of our finite nature *vis-à-vis* infinite universe and hence, science cannot replace religion. In other words, our organic link with religion has nothing to do with our recognition of the unknowable but with a deep feeling of finiteness of our nature. Further, science as a body of knowledge is made of disconnected units of incidental knowledge and, therefore, lacks a unitary character necessary for embodying truth that guides us in day-to-day life, whereas this is not the case with religion.

An important question rises here: Which religion is true religion? The existing religions are too varied to furnish a universally acceptable criterion to judge their relative merit. Their multiplicity implies that all of them cannot be true religions. Tolstoy answers that the underlying principles of all religions are the same and they alone constitute a true religion. True religion has its locus in the kind of relationship man establishes with infinite world around him, so as to bind his life to that infinity. That relation should guide his action in accordance with the practical rules of law such as do to others as you would have them to do unto you. It may seem that Tolstoy is following Kant's notion of the categorical imperative but

Tolstoy places that categorical imperative within the bonds of his religious thought central to which is the idea that genuine religion enables us to be in tune with Infinite in spite of our finiteness.

It is clear, then, why Tolstoy abhors institutionalized religion. According to Tolstoy, every religion consists of two parts: its ethical doctrine and the metaphysical doctrine, the latter elaborated to justify the former. A religion can be said to degenerate when it substitutes the external symbols of a cult for its ethical principles. Besides, as soon as a religion gave an approval to the immorality of the established order it ceased to be a true religion. In Christianity it happened when Constantine, the Great, incorporated Christianity into the pagan faith. That is, while calling himself a Christian, he kept indulging in murder, debauchery, arson etc.,. In fact, from Constantine times Tolstoy counts the beginning of Church-Christianity which is "nearer to paganism than to Christ's teaching". (Maude, Aylmer, 1924:178) From that time on Christianity became a religion which did not demand any kind of moral conduct from its followers and did approve the existing order. Once such an order was sanctioned by the church, the church was condemned to obey it and even justify it by all possible means. This is so with all religions. They subserved existing social orders and thereby the ruling classes and their government which in turn made a religion disown everything it stood for as an original system of conduct. In particular Tolstoy focuses on the connection between violence and its endorsement by institutionalized religions. This violence is facilitated by man-made laws which eclipse the laws given by Christ. The compromise with these laws, particularly the law related to the non-resistance to evil, accounts for the present crisis of Christianity which has replaced Christ by the Church. It is this which is responsible for Church's complete inability to guide us in our life in the world. And this failure is covered up by promising eternal life in a

world beyond that is achievable by means of prayers, rituals and such performances devoid of any meaning. It hides its failure in sheding light on the meaning of our life by obscure dogmas. These dogmas not only generate and strengthen sectarian conflicts at collective level but also take away people's attention from clear and simple truth of genuine religious faith. This truth has all the potential to undermine the authority of the powers that the Church serves. No modern thinker, however radical he is, has subjected the institutionalized Christian religion to such a powerful moral indictment as Tolstoy who summed up his attack when he said "the fundamental cause of the evil is the doctrine taught to mankind. From it arises poverty and depravity, hatred, executions and murder. … It is the doctrine called Christianity" (1901:30) Tolstoy's attack on Christianity in no way softens his critique of modernity. This is because the former is not based on any plank provided by the modern thought. Tolstoy's attack on Church has at its base the principle of reason juxtaposed with a fraudulent faith. But Tolstoy does not identify reason with scientific reason, an identification central to modernity. By 'reason' he meant our innate sense of discrimination between right and wrong. "He submitted the teachings of the church to rational examination in order to eliminate from them everything that was inconsistent with reason and had been imposed on it artificially…. Tolstoy came to the conclusion that there must be absolutely no dissonance between reason and religion if the latter was not to be a pseudo-faith." (Walicki, Andrzej, 1988:330-31) It must be noted here that modernity does not recognize any such innate sense of discrimination and definitely not the discrimination between right and wrong. Even while valorizing reason, as modernity does, Tolstoy links reason with our sense of right and wrong which is so innate as to nullify any possibility of subjectivism or relativism. Reason so construed can be powerful enough to expose the fraud of the Church which is represented as truth. The doctrinal engagement of the Church sought to provide

proofs for its 'truth' not knowing that truth does not need any proof since it is always simple and clear whereas this is not so for dogmas. In order to make its doctrines look convincing the Church takes recourse, apart from proofs, to rituals, icons, relics etc. Tolstoy even rejects Holly Trinity, Revelation, the Immaculate Conception, and the Resurrection. "This was not just because he thought them inconsistent with logic, but above all because they did not seem to him to contain the slightest hints of any "reasonable" rule of conduct." (*ibid*:337) It is now clear why scholars like Bulgakov who characterized Tolstoy as the representative of Enlightenment Rationalism are off the mark. Tolstoy's attack on Church, and thereby institutionalized religion as such, does not bring him close to modernity and its rationalism. Rather, his attack has opposite orientation anchored in faith which for him is the primary source of knowledge - a point of view antithetical to modernity.

The Church has always claimed infallibility for its doctrines and considered itself to be the only institution ordained to preach divine revelation authentically. However, the Church itself has got divided with the result it is impossible to identify what authentic revelation is and this has resulted in fundamental discord. As against this, Christ's own teaching is straight and simple: life is higher than anything else and cannot be subordinated to anything other than God who can be known only by living a life of faith that relates man to God without mediator. And hence, the faith that connects us to God is personal. It is significant to note here that Tolstoy relates truth to faith, however valuable reason may be in undoing the hegemony of doctrines imposed by institutionalized authority. Thus, Church has nothing to do with truth; rather it embodies untruth. The conflict between Church and the State is spurious because neither of the two sides stands for man's spiritual

upliftement. Church and State are equally responsible for all violence including wars, unjust punishment, slavery etc.

In his monumental work *What is Art?* Tolstoy identifies the relation between Church-Christianity and the class divisions in the Christian societies. The gap between upper and lower classes drastically increased when upper, rich, educated classes of European society started to doubt the truth of that understanding of life which was articulated by Church-Christianity. But they did not drop it for it was beneficial for them and justified the privileges they made use of. Hence, for Tolstoy the doctrines of the Church-Christianity continued to be nurtured by the upper classes not because of intellectual conviction but naked self-interest. As he explicitly says "… these rich and powerful people, stranded without any religious conception of life, involuntarily returned to that pagan view of things which places life's meaning in personal enjoyment. And then took place among the upper classes what is called the Renaissance of science and Art, which was really not only a denial of every religion, but also an assertion that religion is unnecessary."(quoted in Maude, Aylmer, 1924:182) So, the Church Christianity never held the Christian community together: the lower classes continued to blindly believe in it, the upper classes ceased to believe this teaching though pretended to be believing. In neither class there was a room for anything like a faith in the fundamental truth. According to Tolstoy, this fact of loss of faith among upper classes and their inability to accept true Christian teaching played a crucial role in the so-called ethical, social and aesthetical 'development' of mankind. Thus, Tolstoy's attack on Church Christianity aims at resuscitating original Christianity of Christ of which the orthodox religion of the church is a travesty. It is this aim which makes his attack on Church non-modern and even anti-modern.

This fact about Tolstoy has not been appreciated because the radical character of his attack on Church goes beyond the modernist critique of religion which is at times halfhearted and even defensive. This is well brought out in his own words: "The Church doctrine is so coherent a system that it cannot be altered or corrected without destroying it altogether. As soon as doubt arose with regard to the infallibility of the Pope (and this doubt was then in the minds of all educated people), doubt inevitably followed as to the truth of tradition. But doubt as to the truth of tradition is fatal not only to popery and Catholicism, but also to the whole Church creed with all its dogmas: the divinity of Christ, the resurrection, and the Trinity; and it destroys the authority of the Scriptures, since they were considered to be inspired only because the tradition of the Church decided it so." (Maude, Aylmer, 1924:182-83) It is significant to note in this connection that Tolstoy contrasts the original Christianity of Christ which demands neither martyrdom nor human sacrifice and the official Christian religion which demands sacrifice of life itself for the sake of the Church. In other words, whereas real Christianity stands for life and its flourishing, the spurious Christianity of the Church negates life itself.

We may now proceed to look at Tolstoy's views on art. Undoubtedly, he considered art to be one of the constitutive conditions of human life. The question of art is important for him because a wrong understanding of nature, status and function of art may "confuse and perplex one's whole comprehension of life". (*ibid*:98) Given his religious bent of mind, it is not surprising that his views on Art are anchored in his religious world view and constitute the *leit motif* of his critique of modernity. However, he is aware of the fact that art has been used to cater to the sensuous in us and promoting our indulgence.

In his analyses of history of Art Tolstoy shows a huge shift that occurred in the history of Art. This shift consists in the radical change in the views on art from ancient times to our modern civilization. Plato and the early Christians, the strict Mohammedans, and the Buddhists have gone so far as to repudiate all art. People viewing art in this way (in contrast to the prevalent view of to-day which regards any art as good if only it affords pleasure) held that art is so highly dangerous in its power to infect people against their wills, that mankind will lose far less by banishing all art than by tolerating each and every art. Evidently such people were wrong in repudiating all art, for they denied what cannot be denied, namely, art as one of the indispensable means of communication, without which mankind could not exist. But not less wrong are the people of civilized European society of our class and day, in favoring any art if it but serves beauty, that is, gives people pleasure.

Tolstoy shows the historical reasons why such a radical change took place by answering the question: “How has art for the sake of pleasure come into esteem?” Notably, he describes the process of secularization from the perspective of art history. The secularization of art has resulted from the following causes. The estimation of the value of art (that is, of the feelings it transmits) depends on men's perception of the meaning of life; depends on what they hold to be the good and the evil in life. And what is good and what is evil is defined by what is termed by religion. When educated people detected the fraud of Church Christianity they remained without any religious view of life. And having none they could have no standard wherewith to estimate what was good and what was bad in art, but that of personal enjoyment. And having acknowledged pleasure as the criterion of what was good in art, that is beauty, the people of the upper classes of European society went back in their comprehension of art to the gross conception of the primitive

Greeks, which Plato had already condemned. Man lost the connection with Nature and religious guidance, and simultaneously lost the meaning of his life. This process later on has been called by Weber "disenchantment" of the world. A new theory divided art into two: art of people and genteel art where the latter one was considered as being a true art. For the great majority of working people the art of the upper classes, besides being inaccessible on account of its costliness, is strange in its very nature, transmitting as it does the feelings of people far removed from those conditions of laborious life which are natural to the great body of humanity. Ceased to be religious, art was impoverished in its subject-matter, for all the feelings of people of the upper class amount only three very insignificant and simple feelings: the feeling of pride, the feeling of sexual desire, and the feeling of weariness of life. These three feelings, with their off-shoots, form almost the only subject-matter of the art of the rich classes.

The subject-matter of true art Tolstoy sets forth as being of two kinds: 1) Feelings flowing from the highest perception now attainable by man of our right relation to our neighbor and to the Source from which we come; and 2) The simple feelings of common life, accessible to everyone, provided that they are such as do not hinder progress towards well-being. Art of this kind makes us realize how great is the extent of our sharing the feelings of one common human nature.

But how are we to know what are the "best" feelings? What is good? And what is evil? This is decided by religious perception. Some such perception exists in every human being; there is always something he approves of, and something he disapproves of. Reason and conscience are always present, active or latent, as long as man lives.

The religious perception of our time, in its widest and most practical application, is the consciousness that our wellbeing, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among men in their loving harmony with one another. The ideal is no longer the greatness of Pharaoh or of a Roman emperor, not the beauty of a Greek, nor the wealth of Phoenicia, but humility, purity, compassion, love. It is clear from what was said above that for Tolstoy the idea of art for art's sake – an idea central to certain aesthetic trends of modernity grouped under formalist school – is to be rejected. For him, content of a work of art is of decisive importance. Even speaking aesthetically, the content acquires a cognitive character and ceases to be merely sensuous only by embodying what he calls the religious perception that celebrates humanity and human qualities rather than singing the glory of exceptional individuals. In short, religion provides an ethical character to the content of a work of art, the touch stone of whose excellence lies in its capacity for edification.

It must be noted that Tolstoy was not anti-art, unlike Plato. In spite of the corruption that art has undergone it has even in our own time all the potential to take us to the realm where we feel the truth that wellbeing of men consists in their unity, in other words, to the Kingdom of God. Unlike mainstream thinkers of modernity, Tolstoy relates, at least normatively, art with truth, in fact the highest truth which he associates, again against modernity, with feeling.

The sectarianism of the church becomes most palpable when it aligns itself, against its own professed principles, with nationalism. Tolstoy considers nationalism to be the bulwark of sectarianism central to modernity. After all, modernity first emerged as political modernity with the rise of nation state with completely and exclusively Christian character with the edict of Isabella and Ferdinand in the last decade of the 16th century whereby Christianity was nationalized and nation was

Christianized. Christianity, even while questioning the scientific dimension of modernity, was too ready to compromise with nationalism and sectarianism which it has promoted for the simple reason that the Church found its association with the nation-state to be more promising for the promotion of its self interest. Hence, church's positioning itself against modernity was self deception.

IV.4. Tolstoy on Truth, Knowledge and Education

The epistemological background of Tolstoy's non-modernist and even anti-modernist critique of the Church as well as his position regarding Art in the scheme of our life has been hinted, directly or indirectly, in the preceding discussion. We may now make those epistemological underpinnings more explicit. Not surprisingly, central to his epistemological scheme is his idea of Truth traceable to his work *Confession.* His reflection on Truth evolved in stages. During his middle age he construed truth as that one should live so as to have the best for oneself and one's family. It was a secular and even utilitarian understanding of truth. But even here he related truth to life and did not entertain its abstract conception as a feature of our representation of the world, that is, as a mere correspondence between our claims and the facts. This means that he never empathized with the conception of truth entertained by modern epistemology with its representativist, foundationalistic and objectivistic orientation and aspiration. However, he soon realized that this conception of truth hardly enables us to answer the eternal question man faces, namely, 'What for do I live?' In this connection he says, "One can only live while one is intoxicated with life; as soon as one is sober it is impossible not to see that it is all a mere fraud and a stupid fraud! That is precisely what it is: there is nothing either amusing or witty about it, it is simply

cruel and stupid. I cannot now help seeing day and night going round and bringing me to death. That is all I see, for that alone is true. All else is false". (2010:26, my translation) At this stage, Truth, as he sees it, becomes inseparable from his pessimistic view of life. Truth, thus, becomes a symbol of death. Even when it characterizes our cognitive pursuits it does not give meaning to life; rather, it denies it and in fact it excludes life itself. It is the knowledge of common people which does not have any pretention to rationality that provides meaning to life. It is this realization that made him shift his focus to the laboring people whose life appeared to him to be full of meaning and hence embodying the Truth. And truth of such a kind has its locus in faith rather than in rationality. Two points are to be noted in this connection. Firstly, in his understanding of truth Tolstoy was moving from empirical sphere of reality to a transcendental one. And secondly, the transcendental was linked to faith. Hence, Truth has nothing to do with knowledge. Berlin expresses this point of Tolstoy very lucidly when he says that, according to Tolstoy, "all our knowledge is necessarily empirical, but it will never conduct us to true understanding, but only to an accumulation of arbitrarily abstracted bits and pieces of information" (Berlin, I., 1978:75) Tolstoy does not deny representational element in knowledge but that element is not the locus of truth. Truth is predicated to faith and faith is not given but inculcated and achieved. Because Truth results from faith, only those who are capable of faith can see it clearly and Tolstoy singles out unsophisticated people and children as having a special access to Truth. Truth is, no doubt, discoverable but it is discoverable in the sense that one cannot come to faith all of a sudden.

The transition from the second to the third stage of his reflection on truth is the shift from 'truth is death' to 'truth is faith'. Tolstoy draws a lesson from his experience of the transition: the earlier a man encounters death the faster he comes

to the truth of life that emanates from faith. The question is: 'Why is Truth open to common people more?' Tolstoy's answer is that for them life is not a fairy tale but indisputable reality. In this connection Tolstoy draws upon an oriental fable, in which a traveler finds himself in a well between the gaping jaws of a dragon at the bottom and a wild beast on the top. Besides he sees a white and a black mice gnawing at the branch he is hanging from. In spite of these unfortunate circumstances he makes a supreme effort and licks few drops of sweet sap oozing from the leaves. The rational individual's reason says that life is doomed and meaningless whereas millions of human beings find meaning in life on the basis of irrational understanding or faith.

Of the two points made by Tolstoy, namely, the relation between truth and faith and common people and children possessing a capacity for faith and, therefore, having a special access to truth, the latter was more important. The religiously minded thinkers even during the heydays of modernity did speak of ultimate truth being provided by faith alone. Tolstoy goes beyond this by privileging the ordinary in having a cognitive access to truth. One of the central claims of modernity is the idea of specialists who possess certain method to attain truth and the method itself guaranties the credibility of their claims. What makes Tolstoy radically depart from modernity on the issue of truth is his rejection of the thesis of experts. This departure was made possible by recognizing something which modernity does not, namely, a certain kind of moral purity. According to modern epistemology, our epistemic activity is morally neutral. This departure takes Tolstoy to the indictment of the intellectual elite so valorized by modernity. In his work *Sources of the Self* Charles Taylor considers moral affirmation of the ordinary to be a hallmark of modern ethical theory. This means that pre-modern ethical thought confined moral excellence to a special class such as worriers or intellectuals or religious seekers

who have sacrificed mundane pleasures. According to Taylor, modern morality rejects this elitism by making room for moral excellence achievable by ordinary persons even in their day-to-day life which the elite consider drab and unexciting. Tolstoy makes room for *epistemic* affirmation of the ordinary when he speaks of ordinary persons like peasants being more open to truth thanks to their innate faith which is nourished by their hard life. It is their faith which enables them to respond spontaneously to the situations they find themselves in.

Before we go further we may note a paradox which Berlin finds in Tolstoy's epistemological scheme. According to him, the entire life of Tolstoy "bears witness to the proposition to the denial of which his last years were dedicated: that the truth is seldom wholly simple and clear, or as obvious as it may sometimes seem to the eye of the common observer". (1978:260). Berlin is right in saying that Tolstoy's case shows that the statement of Enlightenment that truth is complex and required a lot of time to be understood is valid. But it is necessary to take into account that Tolstoy himself is a creation of modernity, and, therefore, truth was not so obvious to him until he realized it. For innocent souls like peasants and children truth is clear and simple.

Thus, Tolstoy locates truth, against the mainstream modernist thought, in faith and faith he locates in the common people peasants and children - "who are not blinded by vanity and pride, the simple, the good". (*ibid*:240) Here again he departs from the modernist idea of epistemic privilege accorded to the intellectual elite treated as s special breed with special gifts and capabilities whom Tolstoy treats as "the self-appointed elite of experts, sophisticated coteries remote from common humanity, self-estranged from natural life, "deprived of "the most precious of all possessions, the capacity with which all men are born – to see the truth, the immutable, eternal truth" (*ibid*). Like Rousseau, Tolstoy is convinced that man is

born free and innocent and hence receptive to truth; and it is only education as construed in the modern society that undermines his capacity to see the truth. Education which modernity considers to be a process of preparing the mind for inquiry only ruins innocence and, thus, undermines the cognitive gifts of those who undergo it. As we have seen, modernity used the metaphor of childhood to characterize, in a pejorative way, the pre-modern stage of human civilization and juxtaposed to it adulthood which modernity claimed to embody. On the contrary Tolstoy celebrates childhood, for according to him, "human beings are more harmonious in childhood than under the corrupting influences of education in later life; and … simple people have a more "natural" and correct attitude towards [the] basic values than civilized men; … they are free and independent in a sense in which civilized men are not". (*ibid*:247). This means real education should facilitate the retrieval of our childhood. The litmus test of genuineness of an education system lies in its ability to usher moral progress. The present system of education is a negation of all morality, it produces a class of civilized elite who are dependent for their survival on "forced labour of others - serfs, slaves, the exploited masses, called ironically "dependents", because their masters depend on them" (*ibid*). The tragic irony of modern society is that those who are exploited are treated as dependents on those who exploit them. The education system of the modern society hides and even buttresses this travesty of truth. Further, such an education makes inequality look natural and become all pervasive by solidifying the separation of the elite from the rest. Every aspect of life of the elite reinforces the relation of alienation between them and the rest. In fact, a substantial part of the wealth of the elite is utilized to erect walls between themselves and the rest. In other words, rich people elaborate a code of conduct at the table, decorate table fashionably, wear such clothes which they are not able to give to the poor for their clothes consist of separate pieces which are used for special occasions; for the poor

such clothes are of no use. To know how and where to wear those clothes, how to behave at a ball, at the table, etc., a good part of education is directed to. So, according to Tolstoy, education in the modern society brings inequality whereas true education should bring in and be based upon equality. In this view Tolstoy was not alone because Populists also believed that liberal education builds wall between men, prevents individuals and groups from "connecting", kills love and friendship and causes "alienation" among entire classes and cultures. Even though such an education absorbs the non-elite, the non-elite are made to internalize the role model that the elite presents to them. It is Tolstoy's conviction that it is elite which needed to be educated for equality. In order to educate themselves the elite should purge their mind of false theories and to re-establish a relationship with so-called uneducated. The prerequisite for their education is the recognition that all men can see the truth, simpler ones more clearly, sophisticated more dimly, because it is a part of what it is to be a man. In the absence of such recognition the elite will delude themselves into thinking that its knowledge which is made out of bits and pieces is genuinely wholesome for the non-elite. They do not understand that such knowledge makes cripples of healthy individuals. Central to Tolstoy's philosophy of education is the idea that real education affirms the need for religious and moral training which consists in transmission to the young of the answers given since ancient times by the wisest people of the world to the questions which inevitably stare at everyone: - first – 'Who am I?' and 'What is the relation of my life to the whole infinite world?'; and the second – 'How should I live in accordance with this relation to the world?', i.e. 'What should I and what should I not do?'" (Tolstoy, L., 2010:444) According to Tolstoy, the answers to these questions constitute religious understanding and moral instruction. It must be noted that these questions do not enter into the educational discourse of modernity. In fact, their very legitimacy is questioned by its mainstream intellectual tradition.

IV.5. Tolstoy's Critique of the State.

Tolstoy sharpens his critique of modernity by attacking the central pillar of modern political organization, namely, the state. He is aware of the fact that, like nation, state too is a modern phenomenon. Though pre-modern societies had states, their capacity to control people and to shape their lives was extremely limited when compared with their modern counterpart. Further, Tolstoy is aware of the fact that modern political theories, conservative or liberal or radical, present the state as an institution the loyalty to which was legally and morally obligatory. Since such a loyalty is implied by the original contract, state in a modern society, that is, the nation state, is what holds the citizens together in the absence of primordial ties which are completely subordinated to the overarching identity of citizenship. The state, therefore, has a semi-religious sanctity and, hence, we must not hold any a moral code against it. We are made to accept that it is a guarantee against illegitimate violence and the violence practiced by the state is not its essence but only an occasional aberration. Tolstoy's critique of modernity fundamentally departs from such a valorization of state. According to him, the institution of the state is no better than the institution of church. This is because state is in its very essence an embodiment of violence, organized and legitimized. Whatever be the pretentions of modern political theories, the state forcefully imposes the will of a person or a coterie on the people. The will of the state or government is to enforce, multiply and protect its position, possessions and power acquired by oppression of others under the mask of noble intention to serve its people. The benign-looking service of the state is presented in terms of the protection against external enemies and in promoting civil and human rights of its citizens. However, Tolstoy's critique of modern state enabled him to see through the veneer of benign character

of the state. Behind its promises of protection, order and justice, Tolstoy saw what the state really is: organized and institutionalized violence. Coupled with this and related to this is the reckless way the state spends money collected through taxes with the bureaucratic instruments avowedly for the fulfillment of its promises regarding security and protection of rights of the people. The bulk of the money is spent on a small section of the society , namely, army, prisons, courts, police and bureaucracy - all of which have a role in the extraction of money from the people. In his work *Slavery of Our Times* Tolstoy seeks to show how the modern state has legitimized a kind of slavery unprecedented in intensity and extensiveness enabled by law. To quote Tolstoy: "The cause of poor condition of working people is slavery. The cause of slavery is laws. Laws are in turn based on organized violence. Therefore, the improvement of the condition of people is possible only if organized violence is obliterated. But organized violence is government." (1952a:181; my translation) The 'rule of law' is just another name for violence, plunder and fraud justified in various ways by modern political philosophers and political scientists who vouch for the utility and even indispensability of state.

Tolstoy's attack on the modern state is made more effective in *Kingdom of God is Within You* where he asserts that there was a time when the violence of government was less than the violence of the individuals, and therefore "the existence of an authority to restrain such violence was an advantage". (1894:205) But it is no more the case. In fact "the whole history of the last two thousand years is nothing but the history of this gradual change in relation between the moral development of the masses, on the one hand, and de-moralization of government on the other." (*ibid* : 208) However, what Tolstoy has in mind is particularly directed to last two hundred years wherein the growth of the violent character of the state and strength of the belief of the oppressed in the benign nature of the state

are directly proportional to each other. According to Tolstoy, though an organized political power existed much before the emergence of modern polity what characterizes modern polity is that there is a firm belief "that the very idea of living without a government is a blasphemy which one hardly dare to put into words." (*ibid*) In the past the moral credibility of the state needed to be established by an ideological persuasion, particularly of a religious kind. But today such credibility stands established without much effort on behalf of the state. The belief in such credibility has become integral part of the political culture. In fact, the chief aim of Tolstoy in his attack on modern polity was against this belief which he considered morally debilitating for the citizens. In the letter to his friend V.P. Botkin Tolstoy writes: "The truth is that the state is a plot, designed not only to exploit but also to corrupt its citizens. For me, the laws laid down by politics are sordid lies… I shall never enter the service of any government anywhere". (1949:168; my translation)

Tolstoy singles out the institution of army for a sustained attack in his indictment of the modern state. The power of the state is embodied in its army. Precisely for this reason every government deems it to be its right to constantly increase the strength of its army. What is hidden from our view is the fact that the aim of the governments is not so much the defense from external threat than their defense from their own oppressed subjects whose resentment can increase with the diffusion of education and with better communication among the subjects and with outsiders. It is significant to note that Tolstoy mentions the distinct possibility of popular resentment against the state, thanks to the emergence of ideologies like communism, socialism, anarchism and the labour movement generally. (cf. Tolstoy, L.,1894:209) The question arises, "Why did Tolstoy single out army in his attack on modern state in spite of the fact that all pre-modern political

establishments possessed armies?" Tolstoy was aware of the fact that the pre-modern societies possessed armies which were not professional. In fact, they were even made of mercenaries. The professionalization of the army in the scheme of modern polity has enormously contributed to its perception as prerequisite for civilized society, and its prestige. In addition, the changed character of the army has brought about a major shift in our perception of war itself. According to one view, modern wars are only peculiar to special political situation of Europe whose volatile nature can be in the long run reduced by diplomacy. The second view regards modern warfare to be hideous but inevitable. A third prospective considers modern warfare to be even desirable in the long run. Tolstoy is most perceptive when he says that the most striking part of this discourse on modern warfare was that the propounders of these views talk of war as though it was something absolutely independent of the will of those who take part in it. In this connection he specifically mentions how a soldier has to surrender his soul for the sake of his professional duty. For instance, a soldier has to execute any order of the government including that which contradicts his Christian conscience. He, a soldier, compels his brethren to surrender their land, to pay taxes, to cease their strikes and even to kill the refractories. "It seems so strange", says Tolstoy in *The Root of the Evil*, "the workmen wish to free themselves, and, yet, they themselves force each other to submit and to remain in slavery. Why do they do this? They do it because all the workmen enlisted or hired as soldiers are subjected to a skilful process of stupefaction and degradation after which they cannot help submitting blindly to their superiors, whatever they may be ordered to do. (1901:24)

What is significant to note is that Tolstoy was highly convinced of the futility of the modern exercise regarding Peace Congresses which apparently seek to undo the violence caused by wars. In fact, such exercises do not question the very

framework of modern political order. Such exercises can act only as shock absorbers. Modern governments encouraged them because the opposition of Peace Congresses to violence is too predictable and fail to focus people's attention on the most significant moral question, namely, 'Ought or ought not each individual man called upon for military service submit himself to the service in the army?'

Tolstoy's attack on the institution of state spared none of its aspects. He did not recognize even a single positive aspect of it. Whatever seems good that government does at a close examination is nothing but evil. In two paragraphs of *The Kingdom of God is within You* Tolstoy gives an exhaustive characteristic of real nature of the government. "… they pretend to support temperance of society, while they are living principally on the drunkenness of the people; they pretend to encourage education, when their whole strength is based on ignorance; and to support constitutional freedom, when their strength rests on the absence of freedom; and to be anxious for the improvement of the condition of the working classes, when their very existence depends on their oppression; and to support Christianity, when Christianity destroys government. To be able to do this they have long ago elaborated methods encouraging temperance, which cannot suppress drunkenness; methods of supporting education, which not only fail to prevent ignorance, but even increase it, methods of aiming at freedom and constitutionalism, which are no hindrance to despotism; methods protecting the working classes, which will not free them from slavery; and Christianity, too, they have elaborated, which does not destroy, but supports governments." (1894:119).

The crux of Tolstoy's attack on modern polity is that the state's encouragement to education and support for constitutional reforms, its programs of upliftement of toiling people are only cloak to cover up its real nature which is inseparable from the interest of ruling classes. As Lenin pointed out "Tolstoy's indictment of the

ruling classes was made with tremendous power and sincerity; with absolute clearness he laid bare the inner falsity of all those institutions by which modern society is maintained." (1971:6)

IV.6. On History and Individualism

We now come back to Tolstoy's epistemological critique of modernity or his critique of modern epistemological standpoint. As we have seen, one of the missions of modernity was to delegitimize pre-modern modes of understanding and replace them by the new modes of understanding. And an important dimension of the modern *episteme* was recasting our notion of history or historical understanding of man. This *episteme* considered pre-modern historical understanding to have been pervaded by mythology. In short, the pre-modern idea of history blurred the very distinction between myth and reality. Hence the need for working out the notion of history on scientific lines. Once man as a historical phenomenon becomes an object of scientific history what is historically relevant becomes confined to what is publicly manifested such that our conclusions about the historical evolution of human society becomes subjected to factual verification. On the other hand, modern thought did not want to accept man as only a mere object of the play of historical forces. This is because such a view nullifies his role as subject in the sense of history-maker, that is, as a being, who makes himself. Therefore, modern thought considered man to be completely free in the sense he shapes himself and his destiny in the light of his reason. Since the capacity called 'reason' is present in human beings in different degrees, shaping the human destiny is to be left to those extraordinary human beings in whom reason has a special presence. It is this idea that generates the belief in the great individuals as moving

forces of history. Tolstoy calls into question the modernist idea of scientific history, and the concept of man's freedom of the will as well as the belief in extraordinary individuals as creators of history. This needs some elaboration.

"At the end of the 18th century, when science had contributed so triumphantly both to man's knowledge of the world and to man's knowledge of his own physical" and mental "attributes, it began to be asked whether science could not also further man's knowledge of society" with its statics and dynamics. It is this confidence which facilitated the growth of "social sciences and of history among them, … and the method by which science studied the world of nature was applied to the study of human affairs." (Carr. E.H., 1961:56) It was a time of late modernity when man was considered as an object as opposed to Descartes' theory of man as subject and the rest of the world being as an object of knowledge. The shift was inevitable: for otherwise it put limits to science. Science could not invent a new method to study man and, hence, applied old tools in studying man and society. This is in spite of the dispute between Methodological Dualism and Methodological Monism.

Tolstoy's philosophy of history was never taken seriously and mostly was considered as trivial and superficial. The sentiment that Tolstoy "is a better artist than thinker" has prevailed for more than a century and such a view has been taken specially on Tolstoy's position on History. In his approach to the questions of history as well as to the eternal questions of life Tolstoy was very close to modern ways of investigations. He had an "incurable love of the concrete, the empirical, the verifiable, and an instinctive distrust of the abstract, the impalpable, the supernatural – in short [a]…tendency to a scientific and positivist approach, unfriendly to romanticism, abstract formulations, metaphysics" (Berlin, I.,1978:29) Only history as a set of empirically discoverable data could, according to Tolstoy, throw light on ethical problems which obsessed him and every Russian thinker of

his time: What is to be done? How should one live? Why are we here? What must we be and do? But soon he realized that history as a science could not arrive at conclusions that possessed certainty; for, it did not reveal causes but mere successions of unexplained events or facts, and which were selected arbitrarily. Besides, history will not explain the connections between science, art, morality, between good and evil, religion and the civic virtues. He "saw clearly that if history was a science, it must be possible to discover and formulate true laws of history which… would make prediction of the future" possible. (*ibid*:32). Tolstoy goes even further by saying that "if we allow that human life can be ruled by reason, the possibility of life [i.e. spontaneous activity involving consciousness of free will] is destroyed". (1940b:238, *War and Peace*, Epilogue, vol.12, part 1, ch.1; my translation)

Arbitrary selection of facts and factors, mostly about political or economic aspects of life by historians was what frustrated Tolstoy the most. These factors were represented by historians as primary and as the efficient causes of social change while, according to Tolstoy, they "represent only 0.001 per cent of the elements which actually constitute the real history of people". "History, as it is normally written, usually represents 'political' – public – events as the most important, while spiritual – 'inner' – events are largely forgotten; yet, prima facie it is they – the 'inner' – events that are the most real, the most immediate experience of human beings; they and only they, are what life, in the last analysis, is made of; hence the routine political historians are talking shallow nonsense." (cf. Berlin, I., 1978:33) It may be noted that Tolstoy calls into question not just the method of the historical understanding but even the very subject matter of history as an intellectual discipline. By completely relegating to the background the story of man in the quest for the spiritual and the ethical, that is, the inner life of man, the prevalent

study of human history focuses on only the outer life of man, that is, man's pursuit of economic and political gains. Such a constricted view of human nature might suit the epistemological and methodological assumptions of history claiming to be scientific. But in doing so, it loses the sight of what is most fundamental in human life as it is lived over centuries.

Emphasizing the multiplicity and endless varieties of causes of an event Tolstoy puts forward an argument to the effect that freedom of will is an illusion, for our knowledge of causes is incredibly small compared to what is uncharted and unchartable. The more we know about the circumstances of an event the less we can imagine how things might have turned out if something different had happened. "Tolstoy's central thesis … is that there is a natural law whereby the lives of human beings no less than that of nature are determined" (*ibid*:41). But rational interpretation of historical events attributes the power to determine the destinies of men and nations to 'important' persons - heroes. Being unable to face what Tolstoy considers to be the central truth about man and nature, i.e. that man and nature are equally subjected to a Natural law, we "seek to represent an event as a succession of free choices, to fix responsibility for what occurs upon persons endowed … with heroic virtues or heroic vices and call them "great men"(*ibid*). What are great men? They are ordinary human beings who are ignorant and vain enough to accept responsibility for the life of society; individuals who would rather take the blame for all the cruelties, injustices, disasters justified in their name, than recognize their own insignificance and impotence in the cosmic flow which pursues its course irrespective of their wills and ideals" (*ibid*:41-2).

The acceptance of inevitability of historical events which is often defined as historical determinism brings Tolstoy's philosophy of history close to that of Hegel. But the difference between them is much deeper. Hegel as well as Tolstoy

subordinated history to the universal reason but the former made it manifest through historical individuals - 'vehicles of Spirit' - by giving them the most important role in the history. State, for Hegel, is highest expression of Universal Reason. We may note in this connection Hegel's poetical glorification of Napoleon. But Tolstoy rejected any worship of the state power and its holders. Tolstoy did not share the view of historical individuals as heroes gifted with a unique soul power and intelligence; nor he attributed to them physical or moral strength. On the contrary, he was convinced that heroes, that is, great men, as a rule, were physically and morally much weaker than people they ruled upon. (1940b:307 *War and Peace*, Epilogue, vol.12, part 1, ch.1; my translation) "...In historical events the so-called great men are mere labels which give a name to an event and which like labels have little connection with that event". (Tolstoy, L., 1940a:7; my translation). This stance of Tolstoy is deemed by some scholars to be a harbinger of a Copernican Revolution in history.

Tolstoy fortifies his position by resolving an eternal dilemma between law of necessity and free will. First of all, he shows that modern history has not made a radical break in its task to describe its subject matter, that is, the life of people or humanity. In ancient times historians did it by describing the life of individuals who ruled people considering themselves as adequate mouthpiece of the masses. Two questions arose: 'How those individuals made their people to act according to their will?', and 'Which power directed the will of individuals?' Those questions were answered by faith in direct participation of God in human affairs. New science of history has rejected these theses in theory, but in practice it follows them. Thus, instead of individuals gifted with Divine power, they placed either heroes talented with extraordinary capacities or other individuals from monarchs to journalists who control the masses. Instead of goals provided by the Divine to Greek, Roman, Jewish people, new historians set forth as a goal the welfare of

civilization which they normally confine to a small north-west part of the big continent. Tolstoy emphasizes that all historians in spite of their seeming differences and apparent novelty of their ideas base their theories precisely on those two old theses. But the most important question "Which power moves people?" history cannot answer. New history rejected Divine power which is unconditioned by space, time and chain of causes, and replaced it by a "self-evident" power which they can neither name nor describe. Each historian understood and described power differently and often in contradictory ways. Thus, Thier said that power of Napoleon was based on his virtues and genius, and Lanfrey held that it was based on fraud and deceit of people. Tolstoy did not deny the importance of power. He considered it to be a necessary condition of an event to occur. According to him, power is the strongest connection among people which bind people together and in its true meaning power is totally dependent on people. So, the only notion that can explain actions of people is the power that is equal to the totality of people's actions. The course of historical events, according to Tolstoy, depends on coincidence of numerous events in which people participate. Thus, a historical event, for Tolstoy, "is the resultant of divergent wills which form historical necessity, which is composed out of the infinitesimal elements of freedom given to each of the participants in a historical event. So, no individual will of Napoleon or Alexander or any other person in power can be the real and the sole cause of a historical event, the necessity of which is caused by the actions of all those human masses who spontaneously created this event. 'Spontaneously' does not mean unconsciously, as it is usually interpreted. It means spontaneously emerging historical result of quite conscious, but different and conflicting personal ambitions and, therefore, the result does not coincide with any of them."
(Kuprianova E.N., 1966:199; 194; my translation)

That is why the theory of new historians about great men moving history fails. Moreover, “Life of people cannot fit in the life of a few individuals, because the connection between those few individuals and people is not found. The theory that this connection is based on transmission of totality of wills of human masses on historical individuals is mere hypothesis, which is not empirically proved by history.” (Tolstoy, L., 1940b:312; my translation) Put briefly, the modern theory of history says the following: the cause of a historical event is power. Power is the totality of wills of the masses transmitted on an individual under condition that this individual expresses the wills of the masses. This means the idea of power has to be taken as self-explanatory with the result that it remains inexplicable. It is many times more opaque than the ancient idea of power as Divine will.

Further, Tolstoy logically explains why without divine participation in the life of humanity it is not possible to consider power of an individual as a cause of an event. The will of God is beyond space and time and that is why His will can relate to the whole chain of events. Man acts in time and space and he himself participates in the event, i.e. he lives in the historical flow and by it. Thus, the will of man can relate only to one or a few portions of the chain of events. In other words, human act is determined by infinite number of “minute” causes in space and time and cannot be spontaneous or free.

Modernity could not come to a consensus regarding free will of man. In early stage of modernity man was considered to be free, that is, as a subject; in the later stage the freedom was denied to man for he became an object. Kant made an attempt to reconcile both by saying that as a phenomenon man is an object, but as a noumenon he is a subject. Freedom, for Kant, like God and Soul cannot be an object of knowledge for we can never claim to know that we are free. Tolstoy accepts none of these stands. He reconciles free will and necessity by locating the former at the individual level and the later at the universal level. Looking at man as

an object of observation we see him as being conditioned by space, time, societal environment etc., i.e. he is subjected to the law of necessity. Looking at him independent of those factors, we realize that he is free. ”I am free at the present moment and conditioned in the past”. Man looks at himself through reason and knows himself through consciousness. Consciousness cannot imagine life without freedom. Reason sees limitations of freedom. That which is not free cannot be limited. Consciousness does not belong to reason. Consciousness gives freedom, reason provides law of necessity. Without free will there would not be theology, justice and ethics; for their subject matters –virtue and vice, right and duty, good and evil – follow from the notion of free will. According to Tolstoy, man as a social being is subjected to laws that determine the life of humanity. But the same man without connection to humanity feels himself free. (In saying this, Tolstoy stands exactly opposite to Marx, if we equate alienation with unfreedom and overcoming of alienation with freedom. For Marx, man who conceives himself as an individual, as is the case in the capitalist system, is a victim of alienation of most intense kind, whereas when he realizes and attains the species character and thus ceases to recognize himself as an individual he overcomes alienation and attains freedom. This is what Marx means when he speaks of man’s journey from ‘kingdom of necessity’ to ‘kingdom of freedom’.) Here again Tolstoy does not support modern view on rationality and consciousness. Modernity identifies them with thinking. Tolstoy shows them as being separate but related to each other as form to content. Freedom is content. Necessity is form. Only their union can provide clear understanding of human life. There is no complete necessity and no complete freedom. “ In order to imagine an act of a man who is totally submitted to the law of necessity without free will, we have to admit the knowledge of infinite number of spacious conditions, of infinitely big period of time and of infinite number of causes. In order to imagine an absolutely free man who is not a subject

to law of necessity we need to imagine him being alone beyond space and time and independent of causes". (Tolstoy, L., 1940b:335, *Epilogue*; my translation)

Thus, by rejecting the role of individuals in history Tolstoy emphasizes first, the role of ordinary people in historical events, because the will of an individual is conditioned by space, time and society and an event is a result of divergent wills which lend the character of historical necessity; and, second, that we cannot know why this or that historical event takes place, because we are ignorant of too many among the vast number of interrelations – the minute determining causes of events. As justly pointed out by Wasiolek E. in his *Tolstoy's Major Fiction*: "Man cannot freely move history, but can freely move in history" (1978:123) Nevertheless, while rejecting the role of individuals in history, Tolstoy did not reject individual as such. Individual in history cannot change anything, he can only 'move in history', but the ultimate regeneration could come only from within. This was the reason why Tolstoy rejected the concept of individual political liberty. He did not believe that civil rights can be guaranteed by some impersonal system of justice. Besides, he was against any planning of society in accordance with some man-made formula. Social contract theory which postulates that the society made of self-interested individuals who consented to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the ruler or the state was totally alien to Tolstoy. According to Hobbes, in a "state of nature" human life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". In the absence of political order and law, everyone would have unlimited natural freedoms, including the "right to all things" and, thus, the freedom to plunder, rape, and murder; there would be an endless "war of all against all". To avoid this, free men contract with each other to establish political community or society through a social contract in which they all gain security in return for subjecting themselves to an absolute Sovereign, one man or

an assembly of men". (wikipedia) Tolstoy had higher evaluation of human nature than thinkers of modernity. Men are good and need only freedom to realize their goodness. Moreover, true life has been revealed to man through his reason. True life consisted for Tolstoy in the realization of kingdom of God on Earth, which for him meant the kingdom of truth and good. He did not demand that men be truthful and do good in order to achieve a personal immortality, but because this was the fullest expression of their own personalities and the only way that peace and happiness could be achieved. He saw in the simple tillers of the soil, the hewers of wood, and the drawers of water a deeper understanding of the meaning of life, of goodness, and of truth. Organized government was, for him, a vast conspiracy against man, designed to exploit his labor, corrupt his soul, and murder him in the violence of war. He fully realized that the end he sought belonged to a distant millennium, but this did not prevent him from devoting all his extraordinary intellectual and artistic powers to denouncing nearly every aspect of modern society which he considered a violation of the natural rights of man.

We may end this chapter by critically looking at Tolstoy's view on religion in his critique of modernity. What is obviously intriguing is his rejection of the importance of the corporate or ecclesial life of a body like church in connecting the individual with the divine. This connection made possible by the mediation of the church is too important even for religious people who may not at all share the socio-political role that the church might have played. Tolstoy does not seem to be sensitive to the fact that church, despite its political role, is primarily a sacramental communion which covers a whole range of the life of a community. Tolstoy in his rejection of organized religion does not seem to have felt the need for an alternative to church to fulfill that need. Secondly, in his rejection of

theoretical, that is, theological engagement with religion he does not take into account the fact that theology is a search for what religion is about. In spite of its doctrinal character and dogmatic orientation theology would not have survived if it, in some sense, satisfied, however, provisionally, the doubts that rise their head quite frequently in the mind of the devout. Such doubts are quite often as existential as religious beliefs themselves. The standard example of such a doubt is the one created by the problem of the evil.

However, a point has to be noted here in favor of Tolstoy. Thinkers who come heavily against organized religion, on the one hand, and theological exegesis of revealed truth, on the other, have completely indentified religion with personal experience such that religion is taken to be a relation of the alone to the alone. Such an experience, in their eyes, can be the one undergone by ordinary people at emotional level or of mystics at the level of visions. Whatever be its kindm such an experience is said to be ineffable. Such a view is very ably portrayed by, for example, William James in his classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). The criticism against such a view is that it entertains a notion of experience which is totally non-public and hence non-interpersonal or non-shareable. Such a notion of experience goes against the very logic of the concept of experience. Tolstoy, in spite of his having undergone a spiritual crisis that altered his view of world and life, does not relate religious consciousness to anything like experience but to intense faith which is spontaneously displayed by those uncorrupted by elite life and education.

Our second criticism about Tolstoy's view of religion concerns the relation of religion to the state. The question is whether Tolstoy is right in speaking about inseparability of church as spiritual power from the state which is the secular power. Undoubtedly it was so in the pre-modern societies. The pre-modern

world view has been rightly described as the view of an "enchanted" world as opposed to the view of "disenchanted" one - an expression coined and made famous by Max Weber. As Charles Taylor points out, "In an enchanted world there is an obvious way in which God can be present in society: in the *loci* of the sacred. And the political society can be closely connected to these, and can itself be thought to exist on a higher plane." (2002:65) The sacred concerns certain places like church, certain times like high feasts, and certain actions like prayer. Thus, central to the pre-modern world view was the distinction between the sacred and the profane. Obviously the church's relation to the state was complete and organic, with the result the state got a religious sanction by the church.

The new world view had no place for higher meanings being expressed by the world, thanks to the characterization of the world as an object, as a machine and thus devoid of anything like a scheme of values or an order of meanings. What happened in the 17th century was the displacement of that enchanted world by a disenchanted world that provided a new mode of understanding of the relation between the cosmos and the polity. However, the modern phase of the relation between church and the state was somewhat complex. Taylor discerns three phases of the evolution of that relation. The first phase which he characterizes as paleo – Durkheimian is more palpably present in the Catholic societies where the pre-modern thinking about the spiritual character of the state lasted longer than in the Protestant societies. No doubt, Catholic societies were "affected by disenchantment, and became more and more a compromise, in which the hierarchical order was in some sense treated as untouchable and the king as sacred, but in which also elements of functional justification began to creep in, where monarchical rule was agreed to be indispensable for order." (*ibid*:70) The next phase departed from the pre-modern view more radically than the first one.

(In fact the two phases were chronologically almost simultaneous) Taylor characterizes the second phase as neo - Durkheimian. In this phase "…the presence of God no longer lies in the sacred, because this category fades in a disenchanted world. But he can be thought to be no less powerfully present through his design." *(ibid*:66) Thus, though God is no more present in the cosmos "the presence of God in the cosmos is matched by the idea of his presence in the polity… it can be present to the extent that we build a society that plainly follows God's design. This mode of presence can be filled in with an idea of moral order that is seen as established by God." (*ibid*:66-67). Living in such a society was to live in a world where God was present, not through the sacred as in the pre-modern world but through the design he has given us to fashion our society including and especially its polity. The state is the indispensible instrument in doing so and, hence, is spiritual in its function. It must be noted that while it is admitted that we must carry out God's purpose by realizing his design in our collective life the church was not given any special knowledge about the design and mode of realizing it, though church was not denied such knowledge. Two points are to be noted in this connection. An idea of a moral order might look as if the Neo- Durkheimian phase is closer to the pre-modern understanding of the relation between religion and state. But, unlike in the case of the pre-modern societies, the agents who carry out the task of realizing the design are, unlike their pre-modern counterparts, disembodied individuals who come to associate together for a common benefit and not "essentially embedded in a society that in turn reflects and connects with the cosmos" (*ibid*:67) It is this difference of individual centeredness with the pre-modern that paves way for the third phase of the modern understanding of the relation between religion and state. This is because the third phase which Taylor characterizes as Post- Durkheimian, which is the most recent phenomenon, is the

result of a New Individualism. Though individualism as such is not a recent phenomenon the New Individualism has acquired a new axis by becoming what Taylor calls 'expressive individualism'. According to the post – Durkheimian understanding, religion ought to be entirely confined to the domain of the individual. What conception of religion one should have and whether one should have any conception at all, should be left to the choice of the individual and any intimidation or even persuasion is not only illegitimate but even obscene. Such a view resonates with "the Romantic expressivism of the late eighteenth century, that each of us has his or her own way of realizing one's own humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority." (*ibid*:83) Such an individualism is Expressivist in the sense it deems that one's beliefs and actions must totally flow from one's own convictions. Since our beliefs and actions are our expressions, they manifest our nature as expressive beings. In short, we have a combination of the old modes of thinking, namely, individualism and Expressivism. The former is a gift of modernity and the latter is a reaction against it. What is very important is that such a view is considered to be following from an ethical culture of authenticity, according to which one must be true to one self alone and to encourage others to do so. The ethics of authenticity is ill at ease with Paleo – Durkheimianism and consistent with Neo – Durkheimianism but inseparable from Post – Durkheimianism since in the new expressivist dispensation, there is no necessary embedding of our link to the sacred in any particular broader framework, whether "church" or state." (*ibid*:95)

The trajectory of secularization of the public sphere can thus be plotted, as has been done, in terms of lesser degree of intimacy between state and religion. Such

a relation is most tangential in the third phase of the trajectory wherein we have been able to arrive at the ideal of a moral order anchored in authenticity. "It is also that in our post-Durkheimian dispensation, the "sacred", either religious or "laique", has become uncoupled from our political allegiance." (*ibid*:96)

The personalization of religion goes hand in hand with the privatization of religion because under the post- Durkheimian dispensation, as Taylor points out, concurring with the view of Jose Casanova (*Public Religions in the Moral World,* Chicago University press, Chicago, 1994), "there would probably be no space for religion in the public sphere. Spiritual life would be entirely privatized, in keeping with the norms of a certain procedural liberalism that is very widespread today." (*ibid*:124)

The question is: 'Did Tolstoy anticipate this development which took place in the second half of the 20th century?' The answer is 'No' and perhaps no one in his context could do so. But 'Does he accept such a development as a desirable?' The answer to this question is also 'No'. Perhaps, he would consider such a personalized religious commitment to be too weak to entail anything normative and, secondly, he would have considered it to be lacking in anything like a positive content, since the only ethical implication it can have is that intolerance is the only thing we should not tolerate. Tolstoy 's view of religion demands that religion is a mode of transcending our individuality and hence cannot go along with the individualized conception of religion, however much it is free from any organic link with the state. Hence, Tolstoy identified religion with the ethical ideal nourished by what he considered to be the faith shared by ordinary people, especially, the peasants. But the question remains – 'In what kind of human practice is such ethics and the faith which nourishes it are anchored?' Tolstoy was too individualistic to articulate that practice in socio-political terms. In other

words, he does not seem to be, thanks to his pro-anarchist mode of thinking, to be inclined to recommend collective action as a means of transcending individuality even by individuals, even while remaining individuals. This seems to be a serious gap in his otherwise powerful attack on modernity. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is no movement with broad social base that interrogates modernity based on his teaching, however much his ideas are found fascinating. This is precisely where Gandhian critique of modernity becomes important. The ideal of swaraj in his scheme implies that every individual ought to have control over things which matter to his life; but those individuals are radically different from individuals of individualism because they deem their socio-political involvement as integral to their spiritual life. However, this idea is worked out by Gandhi on the background of his overall critique of modernity some of whose dimensions we look at in the following chapter.

Chapter V. Gandhi's Critique of Modernity

This chapter aims at understanding Gandhi's response to modernity partly in continuation with and partly distinct from the responses of the thinkers discussed in the previous two chapters. Gandhi's standpoint on modernity throws a challenge to anyone who seeks to provide a systematic articulation of it. Whether Gandhi's response is one of total repudiation, whether Gandhi sought to sugarcoat modernity by providing it a traditional garb, whether he wanted to domesticate modernity and confine it to only the margins of his vision of India, whether he wanted to transcend, in a specifically Indian way, the very dichotomy between tradition and modernity - none of these questions can get an unambiguous answer that can be accepted with an overarching consensus. Even today there is no agreement on the way of decoding Gandhi's central ideas regarding modernity *vs* tradition. One can discern at least seven ways of characterizing Gandhi's response to modernity: 1. That it is one of uncritical traditionalism/conservativism. This interpretation has been provided among others by Nehru and Ambedkar whose judgment was based on Gandhi's valorization of rural India even though Gandhi made it clear that his idea of village was only an ideal to be achieved. 2. That it is one of critical traditionalism/conservativism – a construal to be found in Ashish Nandy. 3. That it is one of moderate traditionalism. Such a view is maintained by Bikhu Parekh in *Gandhi's Political Philosophy, A Critical Examinatio*n (Ajanta, Delhi, 1995). According to Bikhu Parekh ,Gandhi does acknowledge three major positive aspects of modern civilization: A) Its spirit of inquiry and pursuit of truth about empirical world, B) its success in bringing natural order within human control, and C) its having effected a more organized social life. In spite of recognizing these positive aspects of modernity, according to Bikhu Parekh, Gandhi sets aside other equally

important aspects of modernity such as its recognition of the value of individual autonomy and liberty. Further, Gandhi overlooks the fact that modernity makes room for spiritual aspirations in its own way defying its characterization in materialistic and philistinic terms. Further, Gandhi fails to notice that industrialism needs not result in colonialism and imperialism. Also, according to Gandhi, even the positive aspects of modern civilization are only accidental and even incidental to it. 4. That it is a radical traditionalism. This is the view of Ramashray Roy (cf. *Self and Society*, Sage, New Delhi, 1984 and *Gandhi: Soundings in Political Philosophy*, Chanakya, Delhi, 1984), according to whom, Gandhi completely rejected the philosophical foundations of modernity which are constituted by notion of man as self-defining and self-sufficient subject, on the one hand, and the notion of world as an object devoid of any spiritual significance, on the other hand. And it is this rejection of the philosophical ethos of modernity to which Gandhi traces the unalloyed violence of modern times that makes Gandhi's critique of modernity radical, total and final. 5. That it is a moderate modernist view. This view is adopted by D.Hardiman (cf. *Gandhi in his time and Ours*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2003) According to him, Gandhi shared many values with modernity, especially the value of human rights, equality, democratic governance etc.,. Hardiman maintains that Gandhi's indictment of modernity was primarily targeted against the western powers who failed to live up to the very principles constitutive of the core of modernity, especially in the relations to their colonies. Hardiman claims that what Gandhi proposed in his response to modernity was a selective rejection and not a total one. In fact, he was not giving an alternative to modernity but only an alternative modernity, that is a modernity different from its Western version. 6. That it is a modernist one at least a crypto-modernist. According to this view, put forth by many leftists, Gandhi is a modernist who made modernity acceptable by putting it in the garb of tradition. They even go to

the extent of claiming that Gandhi facilitated modernity by promoting capitalism in a society which was hardly open to the ideology of capitalism. This he did by playing the role of a "prophet who by his saintliness and selflessness could unlock the door of the hearts of the masses where the ... bourgeois could not hope for a hearing" (Rajani Palme Dutt quoted in Markovits, Claude, 2003:35) Finally, 7) That it is a post-modernist position. This view is adopted by Rudolph Llyod L. and Rudolph Susanne H. (cf. *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the world and at Home*, 2006) According to them, Gandhi rejected, like post-modernists after him, all grand narratives germane to modernity, especially the narrative of progress. In particular, Rudolphs bring to our notice Gandhi's concept of relative truth which fits with post-modernist perspective of truth as situational and contextual. He set aside the universalism claimed by revealed "sacred and authoritative texts" and worked out his own religious ideas in relation to folk religions and his own convictions built on them. Further, his disinclination, as we see below, to work out a well-knit system of thought brings him closer to the post-modernist orientation. Added to this is a post-modernist emphasis on a minimalist state, decentralized power structure and production. Like post-modernists, he realized the centrality of power within the ethos of modern civilization that determines what is acceptable and what is not. To the question whether non-violence had any role in human history Gandhi's answer was that history has been recorded as per the interests of those who practiced violence and they could do so because of the power they commanded. Even while recognizing that Gandhi is a critical conservativist, Nandi acknowledges that "Gandhi, despite being a counter-modernist, re-emerged for the moderns as a major critic of modernity whose defense of traditions carried the intimations of a post-modern consciousness." (1994:2)

There may be, and there are, many more ways of configuring Gandhi's response to modernity. In fact, Gandhi's responses to issues other than that of modernity also lend themselves to plurality of interpretations. This is mostly because Gandhi did not and did not want to build a philosophical system. His skepticism regarding system building was even stronger than other modern Indian thinkers. It is this skepticism which takes Gandhi and other modern Indian thinkers away from the modern Western thought which, particularly at its 'Enlightenment' phase, valorized system building even while rejecting the construction of metaphysical systems characteristic of pre-modern thought. After all, Enlightenment philosophers made reason their center of gravity in the attempt to build philosophical systems. As Ernst Cassierer in his work *The Philosophy of Enlightenment* points out "The method of reason... consists in starting with solid facts based on observation, but not in remaining within the bounds of bare facts. The mere togetherness of the facts must be transformed into a conjecture, the initial mere co-existence of the data must upon closer inspection reveal an interdependence; and the form of an aggregate must become that of a system." (quoted in Pani, Narendar Manuscript)

Be it as it may, in the view of this thesis Gandhi's response to modernity is in a literal sense a *critique,* that is, it seeks to show the limits of modernity as a mode of thinking and as a way of living. This he does by working out a new framework within which only certain aspects of modernity can be admitted. In other words, whatever is admissible in modernity has to be validated by the framework and nothing in modernity including its science, technology and democracy are self-validating. Without being validated by the new framework modernity produces the illusion that to have industries is to build an industrial society. Such a framework will enable us, Gandhi was convinced, to marginalize modernity itself before

modernity marginalizes the bulk of mankind. By foregrounding such a framework Gandhi made it clear that the thoughts guiding individual life and organizing principles of collective life cannot have their source in modernity. Most importantly, such a framework is not parasitic upon the pre-modern ethos but the eternal truths. When he calls himself a 'sanatani' Gandhi makes it clear that he considered truth not to be located in the past but to be recognized as timeless. In this way the framework transcends the dichotomy between tradition and modernity - a dichotomy central to both the proponents and opponents of modernity. The rest of the chapter seeks to identify the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical underpinnings of that framework. Such underpinnings can be made accessible by juxtaposing them with their modernist counterparts.

Before we do so, certain preliminary remarks are necessary so as to situate the Gandhian perspective on modernity within the historical context in which he found himself. One of the ways to do so is to locate him within the intellectual ethos that engendered what is called 'Modern Indian Philosophy'.

V.1. Historical and Intellectual Context

Modern Indian Philosophy as an intellectual category has not received the attention it deserves. It is usually taken to be either not modern or not Indian or not philosophy. The reasons behind this false dogma may be (a) it relates itself to the pre-modern or traditional Indian philosophy in the way modern Western philosophy does not relate itself to its traditional counterpart; (b) it is not discursive in the way philosophy is customarily understood, precisely because its concerns were too substantive and consequential for the unique situation India found itself in the 20th century. Central to the concerns of modern Indian philosophy was modernity itself as it sought to embed itself in the life of the Indian people. The

perspectives on modernity were determined by the perspectives on colonialism itself. One can discern three perspectives on colonialism*:

1) The theory of total subjugation according to which both the socio-political - economic body of India as well as the cultural self are completely decimated by colonialism with the result that India in order to re-build its body and self from the scratch and it cannot do so without adopting in *toto* modernity which should, therefore, receive unqualified acceptance.

2) The theory of cultural self according to which, though colonialism destroyed the socio-political-economic body the cultural self remained unscathed even under severe onslaught and hence modernity should be accepted only for a limited purpose of re-building the body and hence modernity should be provided a qualified acceptance.

3) The third view which we may call 'the theory of revitalization' maintains that though both the body and the self of India were badly injured they can be revived and the process of revival has nothing primarily to do with modernity which might serve some marginal and tentative purposes and, therefore, deserves only a unqualified rejection, by and large.

Gandhi was one of the foremost among those who shared the third view and the corresponding stance towards modernity. A few words about the conception of tradition that is entailed by the stance of Gandhi are in order.

No doubt, the tradition was construed as something more than what is given or received as a civilizational legacy; it is at least partly worked out by the cultural vanguard as an intellectual category to be deployed in the anti-imperialist struggle.

* I awe the classification and characterization of these three views regarding colonialism to late D.R. Nagaraj (*Sahitya Kathana* (in Kannada) Akshara Prakashan, Heggodu, Karnataka, 1996)

Gandhi received such a conception of tradition from the 19th century Indian nationalism. As Geeta Kapur says, "Since tradition even in its conservative allegiances emerged in the decolonizing process as an oppositional category, it has the power of resistance as we know very well from Gandhi. The power to transform routinely transmitted materials from the past into discursive forms that merit in consequence to be called contemporary, even radical. If the savants of this century ... have excavated the past to provide the present ... with perennial life-symbols, the exercise has rather special significance when this is contextualized within an anti-imperialist struggle." (1990:49-50) It may be noted in this connection that, in the words of Kapur, "Coomaraswamy (*in the context provided by Gandhi*), even when he addresses national cultural issues from a conservative position, produces an interventionist discourse opening up new and numerous other issues besides 'Indianness' – issues about the function of art in society and above all the advanced role of artists in the formation of a more universal world culture." (*ibid*:50, emphasis added) In short, for Gandhi as well as Coomaraswamy, Tagore and others, tradition was not an ideal aspired for or an erased past to be revived but a living reality that provides vantage point for a concrete critique of modernity. They found the living tradition in the art of the folk in the case of Tagore, the works of craftsmen in the case of Coomaraswamy and the artisans in the case of Gandhi. To that extent and in this sense, Indian nationalism contextualized the terms 'tradition' and 'modernity' in such a way that "Tradition is not simply an anthropological phenomenon as it was conceived by western modernists when they discovered primitive cultures. Even though nationalism as ideology introduces its own measure of abstraction in the concept of tradition it also... sees it as process. A tradition-in-use, shall we say." (*ibid*:56) It is this view of tradition which distanced Gandhi and his colleagues from the Western discourse regarding the oriental

cultures which make non-western societies "as objects to be processed by western subjectivity." (*ibid*)

The above discussion was gear towards showing that, unlike most of the critiques of modernity, Gandhian critique had a material basis in the lives of the peasants and practices of artisans. Geeta Kapur rightly speaks of "artisanal basis of Gandhian ideology" and couples it with "craftsman's canonical aesthetic of Coomaraswamy" and Tagore's owing up of peasant's songs of *baul* musicians along with *Upanishadic* hymns. It is this material basis of Gandhi's conception of tradition that saves his critique of modernity from being conservative and his conception of tradition from being merely a polemical category. The question is, 'What are the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical underpinnings of such a non-conservative critique of modernity?'

V.2. Gandhi's World View

It is apt to begin the discussion of Gandhi's metaphysics with its conception of nature since it is here his departure from the core of modernist philosophy becomes palpable. As we have seen, objectification of nature was the hallmark of modernist philosophy. Against the pre-modernist conception of nature which construed nature primarily in terms of scheme of values or order of meanings modernity looked upon nature in terms of phenomena brought about by natural forces whose workings could be captured in terms of regularities describable in mathematical language. Scholars have quite meaningfully described the transition from the pre-modern conception of nature to the modern conception as the replacement of sacrilized nature to a de-sacrilized one. Gandhi's rejection of de-sacrilized nature is best illustrated in his controversy with Tagore regarding the earthquake in Bihar in

1934. Gandhi made a statement to the effect that the tragedy in Bihar was a 'divine chastisement' for the sin committed against the so-called untouchable castes. Tagore resented against what he called the unscientific view of things which would gain credibility by Gandhi's statement. It was for Tagore a truism that "the physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in a certain combination of physical facts". And Tagore continues: "If we associate ethical principles with cosmic phenomena, we shall have to admit that human nature is morally superior to Providence that preaches its lessons in good behavior in orgies of the worst behavior possible." (Prabhu, R.K., and Kelekar Ravindra, 1961:116) To this charge of support to unreason Gandhi's answer is revealing: "To me the earthquake was no caprice of God nor a result of a meeting of mere blind forces". Gandhi continues: "Visitations like droughts, floods, earthquakes and the like, though they seem to have only physical origins, are, for me, somehow connected with man's morals." (*ibid*:118-9).

What is important regarding this episode is not so much Gandhi's specific claim regarding the earthquake in Bihar but the principle which underlies his conception of nature. This point needs some elaboration.

There were many people like Kaka Kalelkar who sided earlier with Gandhi against Tagore when the latter protested against Gandhi's call to burn the foreign clothes in 1921 and what he called Gandhi's cult of charkha but sided with Tagore in his protest against Gandhi's claim regarding Bihar earthquake. Kalelkar protested to Gandhi privately and confessed that he could not follow Gandhi's strange logic. But Gandhi put a counter question "Do you think that there is absolutely no correspondence between the moral world and the physical world? Can you say that moral actions of man have no reaction on man's life or his physical surroundings?" (cf, foreword, *ibid*: xiv) To this Kalelkar replied: "Our moral and immoral actions

do have a direct effect on everything around us. The universe cannot be a pluriverse." (*ibid*) Gandhi's reply is very significant: "In that case it is a minor matter whether the Bihar tragedy of an earthquake is related to the sin of untouchability or something else." (*ibid*) What this means is that the questions: 'Why earthquake in Bihar and not in Tamil Nadu?', 'Why in 1934, why not in 1924?', 'Why earthquake as punishment and not floods?' are all irrelevant. What is relevant for Gandhi was the intimate connection between nature's workings and human actions. It must be noted that Gandhi's view of nature does not exactly square with the pre-modern view of nature. In the pre-modernist view man relates to nature by contemplating on the scheme of values or order of meanings in nature and thereby realizes his human essence. Gandhi's view is also different from the Expessivist view of nature, according to which, nature is what man engages in communion with and through which he realizes his expressive being. For Gandhi, our relation with nature is mediated by our ethical actions. It is ethics which unites the human reality with natural reality. The ethical engagement is different from both contemplation and communion for the simple reason that it is action-oriented. It is conviction of Gandhi which enables him to radically distance himself from the idea of nature central to the Enlightenment conception of the world as an object, that is, as something not integrally related to us as human beings.

Gandhi's view of the relation between man and nature is apparently (only apparently) akin to what Charles Taylor recognizes as one of the important strands of pre-modern vision of moral order. This strand entertains the idea that "disorders in the human realm ... resonate in nature because the very order of things is threatened." (2004:10) This idea is dramatically brought out in certain literary works. Taylor mentions in this connection how in *Macbeth* nature behaves in a violent, weird and bizarre ways just before Duncan is murdered. We can add the

example of the abnormal ways nature displays in *Julius Cesar* before Cesar is murdered by Brutus and his men. However, such an idea is not shared by Gandhi since that idea of moral order in the scheme of pre-modern thought is woven "around a notion of hierarchy in society that expresses and corresponds to a hierarchy in the cosmos." (*ibid*:9) Gandhi's view on man – nature relation as morally mediated has nothing to do with the notion of social hierarchy as a reflection of cosmic hierarchy. It is confined to the idea that nature makes moral demands on us in our dealings with others and nature itself and it will respond appropriately when those demands are not met.

Akeel Bilgrami characterizes, on behalf of Gandhi, the modern condition of man-nature relation germane to the philosophy of Enlightenment as one of alienation which he thinks has its resonance in Marx. (cf. 2014:129-130) According to Bilgrami, the difference, however, between Gandhi and Marx regarding the alienated life "was really only over the level of specificity at which they analyzed its sources. Gandhi looked for very much more general – the largest visible – sources of alienation. Marx, by contrast, bearing down in particular on capitalism as an economic formation, located far more specific sources." (*ibid*: 130) However, Bilgrami seems to overlook the fact that Marx characterized all societies barring primitive communism as embodying alienation which, according to him, was the result of division of labor, commodity production and private property. Thus, alienation is a hallmark of all class societies though it is most acute in the most advanced of all class societies, namely, the capitalist society. So, Marx does not confine alienation to capitalist society. On the other hand, Gandhi singles out modern civilization, of which capitalism with its cult of industrialism is the crucial component, for attack in connection with the state of alienation. Bilgrami overlooks the fact that, unlike for Gandhi, for Marx alienation was concomitant

with progress since the affirmation of human nature by way of a productive relation with nature goes hand in hand with the denial of human nature which for Marx is the state of alienation. However, Bilgrami rightly recognizes that "there is a level of description one could give of the sources of alienation that they each respectively identified that would present them as diagnosing the same thing: the transformation of the human subject to an object or, to put it more elaborately, an increasing *detachment* of the wrong kind* in one's relation to the world..., and therefore an increasing loss of genuine subjectivity and subjective engagement with the world." (*ibid*:130) For Bilgrami, the term detachment of the wrong kind designates the "dominant attitude by which one related to nature, and the world in general, a highly intellectualized, scientific gaze that led eventually to treating it ... as a means" (*ibid*:357, note 5)

This does not mean that Gandhi was averse to science. In fact, he even hoped that one day the eternal truth will be represented by science in a new light. He never suspected either the claims of science or its method. What stands rejected by him in the light of his conception of nature is the status that science has acquired in the cognitive/cultural matrix of modern society and, the power it bestows on those who control it and, more importantly, the ideology that is perpetrated in its name, namely, the ideology of industrialism. This ideology pushes us to go from the fact that science studies nature to the distorted idea that nature is what is studied by science. In other words, Gandhi opposes, not science but the cognitive monopoly of science that underlies our engagement with nature. In other words, we are seduced to go from the idea of nature as something we live in to the idea of nature as something we should master and control with the result "we transform the

*This is in contrast with the detachment of the right kind which is morally and spiritually desirable – an idea central to Gandhi's notion of *Anasakti*

concept of *nature* into the concept of *natural resources.*" (*ibid*:133) Thus, Gandhi rejects the modernist idea that our relation with nature is only cognitive and the cognitive relation is only scientific and scientific engagement is one which provides us control over nature, that is, an object to be mastered and enslaved. Bilgrami aptly notes "The pervasive Bhakti influences on Gandhi made him think of nature in essentially sacralized and spiritual terms. To think of nature as shot through with divinity was an intrinsic obstacle to transforming it conceptually to the idea of natural resources." (*ibid*)

V.3. Gandhi's Epistemology

We now proceed to show how Gandhi's epistemological ideas make a radical break with their modernist counterparts. We may begin our discussion of Gandhi's anti-modernist epistemological framework by noting that such a framework is ethics-centered and such an ethics-centered epistemological standpoint squares very well with his conception nature-man relation. Such a conception, it is obvious, stands in direct opposition to the modernist conception in terms of object and subject. For Gandhi, man's uniqueness does not lie in his epistemic subjectivity but in his moral agency which consists in our sense of responsibility towards nature whose moral demands we have to meet. It is precisely what makes nature something radically different from a mere object. Gandhi's epistemological framework and its anti-modernist thrust become illuminating on the background of his metaphysical commitment briefly discussed above.

What strikes one in the epistemological framework of Gandhi is his contention that faith is a primarily epistemic category. In the modernist ethos faith is either relegated to the realm of the non-cognitive and is confined to the realm of personal

beliefs or doctrines shared by a community holding it together. In its most sophisticated version, faith is juxtaposed to knowledge as in Kant who admits that he had to make room for faith in his scheme so as to overcome the conflict between science and religion. To quote Kant "I had to *abolish* knowledge in order to *make room for faith*" (*Critique of Pure reason*, 19 B XXX, emphasis added) As we all know, Kant confines moral freedom, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God as a morally perfect being to the domain of faith since they cannot be objects of knowledge as they are only thinkable but not perceivable. In other words, faith falls outside the domain of knowledge proper or at best exists on the margins of the cognitive domain. Gandhi rejects this characterization of faith by treating it as a central epistemic category. This is very well brought out in his reply to the criticisms made by Tagore and others against his view that the earthquake in Bihar was a Divine punishment against the practice of untouchability – the episode to which we have referred above. Significantly, Gandhi titles his response 'Superstition *vs* Faith'(*Harijan,* 16-2-1934). He confesses: "I cannot prove the connection of the sin of untouchability with the Bihar visitation even though the connection is instinctively felt by me." (Prabhu, R.K. and Kelekar Ravindra, 1961:120) Responding to Tagore's view that our own sins even if enormous have no force to drag down the structure of creation to ruins, Gandhi says "I have the *faith* that our own sins have more force to ruin that structure than any mere physical phenomenon." (*ibid,* emphasis added) However, this faith is not mere faith because, unlike belief in such things like astrology which Gandhi despised, it is morally uplifting. This is because if the faith "turns out to be ill-founded, it will still have done good to me and those who believe with me. For we shall have been spurred to more vigorous efforts towards self-purification, assuming of course, that untouchability is a deadly sin." (*ibid*) More importantly, he says "I know full well the danger of such speculation. But I would be untruthful

and cowardly if, for fear of ridicule, when those that are nearest and dearest to me are suffering, I did not proclaim my belief from the house-top." (*ibid*) The damage caused by the earthquake may be rectified at least partly "But it would be terrible, if it is an expression of the divine wrath for the sin of untouchability and we did not learn the moral lesson from the event and repent for that sin." (*ibid*) Thus, for Gandhi, faith embodies enormous cognitive significance even when it remains indemonstrable speculation provided that 1) one openly and loudly declares it; 2) it results in actions that are morally uplifting and make us repent for our sins; 3) it does not allow me to casting our opponents who do not accept that faith, that is, faith that must bring in humility in me so as not to ridicule those who do not share the faith. Such a faith draws us nearer to God and makes us ready for facing Him. Gandhi draws a fine line between faith and superstition when he says faith "would be degrading superstition, if out of the depth of my ignorance I used it for casting my opponents." (*ibid*:121)

In this connection it is helpful to look at how William James responded to the views of William Clifford regarding what Clifford calls 'the ethics of belief'- an expression which is the title of his well known book. According to Clifford, it is the central principle of ethics of belief to never turn our hypotheses or speculations into accepted theories unless we have adequate evidence. The cardinal moral precept of our age is to completely overcome the temptation to yield to comforting beliefs which do not have evidence to back them. It is, therefore, our moral duty to protect ourselves from accepting established beliefs. Those who do so sin against mankind. In short, according to Clifford, "we can win the right to believe a hypothesis only by first treating it with maximum suspicion and hostility." (quoted in Taylor, Charles, 2002:46) William James rejected this view. According to him, there are cases "where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in

its coming." (*ibid*:47) More importantly, Clifford's view brings to our attention the risk that we are inviting by believing in things not supported by evidence. But, James will ask, "What about the risk we invite by not recognizing the truths which are accessible only through faith?" "In what way the second kind of risk is less significant?" Which of the two risks is to be avoided is a matter of individual's choice and neither of two choices can be more rational than the other. As against Clifford's idea of our duty to believe only established truths James speaks of our right to believe those things which while lacking rational grounds appeal to the so-called 'non-rational' and, in particular, volitional aspect of our nature. Gandhi's contention that the value of our faith lies in the way it spurs us into willing a moral transformation irrespective of the absence of evidential support can be better understood in the words of William James: "I... cannot see my way to accepting the agnostic rules for truth-seeking, or willfully agree to keep my willing nature out of the game. I cannot do so for the plain reason, that *a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.*" (quoted in Charles Taylor, 2002:49) However, what James does not emphasis is the nature of truth associated with faith and its difference with truth which figures in the agnostic's effort to veto any belief which does not have justification in the conventional sense. This takes us to Gandhi's conception of truth which is one of the two centers of gravity of his whole philosophical framework, the other being non-violence.

When Gandhi speaks of truth he does not speak of it in the conventional sense of a match between propositions and facts. Gandhi is not concern with truth in this sense. In the Indian tradition two senses of truth are recognized – pramaanya and satya. The former concerns truth in the conventional or mundane, or better still empirical sense. The latter is not so. Gandhi's truth obviously is satya. This does

not mean that Gandhi rejected the very notion of empirical truth (pramaanya). After all, he had great respect for scientific inquiry so long as it does not promote technologies that enslave human beings. For him, scientific truths in particular and empirical truths in general are a limiting case of broader frame of reference the center of which is occupied by truth in the sense of satya. It must be stressed here it precisely in thinking so that Gandhi departed radically from the modernist notion of truth.

The fundamental difference of modernist notion of truth and Gandhi's conception of truth is that the former juxtaposes truth with *falsity* whereas Gandhi juxtaposes truth with *untruth* and untruth is not only lying to others but also to lying to oneself. Secondly, the modernist notion of truth is located in the notion of fact but this is not so with Gandhi's. Responding to the criticism that he has no concern for desires and weaknesses of the flesh Gandhi says "I recognize them as facts but not as truths." Nothing more is needed by way of radically departing from the modernist conception of truth as correspondence with facts and nothing more. What, then, are the hallmarks of truth as Gandhi understood it, that is, as trans-empirical? There is a view adopted by many Gandhians, according to which, for Gandhi truth is truthfulness. This is not wrong but does not do adequate justice to the complex nature of Gandhi's conception of truth. The view is correct to the extent that commitment to truth, according to Gandhi, logically implies truthfulness, that is to say, for Gandhi, it is a contradiction to say I know truth or believe in something as true but I do not want to commit myself to it in word, thought and action. However, Gandhi's truth is something more than truthfulness. In fact, it is this something more which binds truth and truthfulness in his scheme. Some broad strokes about this 'something more' are in order bellow.

It is very clear that what Gandhi has in mind is not truth in the propositional sense. Akeel Bilgrami rightly points out that for Gandhi truth "is an experiential notion." (2011:96) However, Bilgrami is not convincing when he says "the notion of Truth (satya) that is so central to his religion is not a cognitive notion that holds of propositions" (*ibid*) because Gandhi cannot be said to equate cognitivity with propositionality since for him cognition in the sense of knowledge may include but transcend propositional knowledge. Just as we have noted the distinction between pramaanya and satya we may also note the distinction between prama and jnana, the latter being knowledge or cognition in the trans-empirical sense. That Gandhi has experiential notion of truth is clear from Gandhi's own words: "It has been my *experience* that I am always true from my point of view and I am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view." (quoted in and emphasis by Bilgrami, *ibid)* The experiential notion of truth has, therefore, room for plurality – a fact recognized by Gandhi who in his own way accepted and conceptualized the Jain theory of anekantavada/syadvada. But as Bilgrami points out, "If truth is a predicate of one's experiences, not of propositions, subjectivism becomes more believable." (*ibid*) But Gandhi cannot accept subjectivism regarding truth since in some crucial ways truth is universal because the concept of truth is a normative concept. The viability and even strength of Gandhi's notion of truth depends upon how he reconciles truth as experiential and, therefore, subjective and truth as normative and, therefore, universal. Now, in fact, we find a similar problem in Kant's aesthetic theory. According to Kant, a pure judgment of taste such as 'This picture is beautiful' is not about an object but its representation. It is not based on concepts and hence there are no objective criteria to determine whether it is true. From this it follows that the person who makes the judgment has to feel the pleasure himself such that what is decisive is his own pleasure or displeasure. The contrary

judgments of others have no bearing on his own judgment. To quote Kant "If any one reads me his poem, or brings me to a play, which, all said and done, fails to commend itself to my taste, then let him adduce Batteux or Lessing, or still older and , more famous critics of taste, with all the host of rules laid down by them, as a proof of the beauty of his poem... I stop my ears: I don't want to hear any reason or any arguing about the matter." (*Critique of Judgement*, 1952, 33, 140/284 AE). It is precisely in this sense pure judgments of taste/pure aesthetic judgments/judgments about the beautiful are subjective. However, Kant is equally emphatic in distinguishing a pure judgment of taste from a judgment about agreeable (which is, therefore, an impure judgment of Taste such as I like this painting'). The fundamental distinction lies in the fact that when 'I make the former judgment I mean not only I like the painting , but also others also like it and others must, that is, necessarily like it. Thus, a pure judgment of taste, unlike the latter, commands a necessary universal agreement. According to Kant, the locus of such universal agreement lies in the common human nature. It is this concept of common human nature which is the basis of Kant's transcendental deduction about the judgments of beautiful which shows how the judgment about the beautiful, unlike the judgment about the agreeable, is grounded in subjectivity which can be presupposed in all men. Thus, Kant succeeds in retaining subjectivity of pure judgments of taste while not making room for aesthetic relativism/subjectivism.

We now come back to the question of how we can reconcile the fact that for Gandhi truth is primarily experiential (rather than propositional) with his fundamental recognition that truth is normative. Gandhi could bring about reconciliation in a way akin to Kant's approach and claim that there is a common human nature which is the ground of universal agreement regarding truth as experiential. This is what he meant when he said that what I experience to be truth

is not accepted by others today but it will be definitely accepted some time in future. This hope is not merely pious but one based on his conception of human nature, particularly its moral dimension. But an equally plausible way of reconciling the experientiality of truth with its normativity is by considering experience itself in a normative sense, that is, to consider experience not as *given* but as *achieved*. Experience as an achievement and, therefore, as normative is possible by its authentication by what he calls conscience which is to be cultivated and not something to be born with. The cultivation of conscience is what is called 'education' central to which is a protracted struggle against untruth. It is this which relates truth to human agency. Such a conception of truth is farthest away from truth as merely a correspondence with facts which characterizes the representation of objects by a subject whose human agency is of no consequences to the epistemic concept of truth. To reiterate a point already made, Gandhi juxtaposes truth with untruth and not with falsity, just as he juxtaposed faith with superstition not with knowledge.

V.4. Gandhi's Ethics

We will briefly discuss how Gandhi's approach to questions of morals is radically different from that of the modernist one. The central questions of normative ethics in the West are: 'What is good?' and 'What is right?' It may be noted that the whole of the modern moral philosophy has completely ignored the first question, mostly because it was thought that the question of 'What is to be pursued as an end in itself?' might be better left to the individuals themselves since liberalism, the core of modern political philosophy, maintains that an individual has an inalienable right to pursue whatever he or she deems to be worth pursuing. Hence, it was only

the second question that concerned the standard to be deployed in moral evaluation of actions that occupied the complete attention of modern philosophers. As Charles Taylor points out, modern moral philosophy "has needed to focus on what is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life; and it has no conceptual place left for a notion of the good as the object of our love or allegiance or, ..., as the privileged focus of attention or will." (1989:3) However, this question was central to Gandhi's ethics. Equally importantly, Gandhi departed from modern ethics by refusing to answer the second question in the manner in which modern ethics seeks to answer, namely, construing the standard in terms of a principle, utilitarian or deontological. This needs some elaboration.

As said earlier, pre-modern philosophers did seek to answer the question regarding what is good, that is, what ought to be pursued as an end in itself, in terms of happiness or harmony in one's personality or perfection. In the modern phase of philosophy only Kant sought to answer the question. The very first sentence of the first section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785) provides Kant's answer to the question, "What is good?": "It is impossible to conceive of anything in the world or outside of it which can be considered good without qualification excepting only a good will." But Kant did not elaborate on his answer apart from saying that good will consisted in acting not only in accordance with but also for the sake of the categorical imperative, that is, the moral law. Gandhi's answer to the first question has duty at its core, that is, a good life is one which consists in fulfilling one's duty. We will elaborate on, however briefly, Gandhi's answer to the first question as we proceed. Like Kant Gandhi relates his answers to the two questions in an organic way, but in a strikingly original manner. Gandhi's answer to the second question does not involve, unlike that of Kant, anything like a

moral principle concerning duty as freely submitting one's will to the moral law by adopting only those maxims that conform to the categorical imperative. Gandhi's answer to the second question has also nothing to do with utilitarian principle, rejected by Kant and propounded and expounded by Hobbes and Hume before Kant and Mill and Bentham after him. In short, the significant point about Gandhian ethics is that while propounding duty-centered conception of good (that is good life) he departs from the Kantian approach of erecting duty-centered idea of standard. Akeel Bilgrami brings out this point very lucidly and tellingly. Bilgrami rightly points out that the received tradition of moral philosophy in the West maintains that if moral judgments have to be something more than judgments about what one likes or dislikes, they must possess a feature called universalizability. (This universalizibility is different from what Kant considers to be the criterion of a morally right action, namely, an action based upon a maxim which the agent wills to be a universal law) This view is common to both Utilitarianism and Deontology and, in fact, for any modern moral theory. According to such a demand "To choose an action on moral grounds under certain circumstances is to generate a principle which we think applies as an 'ought" or an imperative to *all* others faced with relevantly similar circumstances." (2014:109) If so, if one makes a moral judgment then those who do not accept it must be considered wrong and can be subjected to criticism. Gandhi completely opposes this mode of moral thinking and in this process rejects a fundamental orientation of modern moral thinking. Bilgrami is absolutely right in saying: "In the philosophical tradition Gandhi is opposing, others are potential objects of criticism in the sense that one's particular choices, one's acts of moral conscience, generate moral principles or imperatives which others can potentially disobey. For him, conscience and its deliverances, though relevant to others, are not the wellsprings of principles. Morals is only about conscience, not at all about principles."

(2014:111) In other words, for Gandhi a morally right judgment that results in a morally right action is not yielded by an *a priori* moral principle but by the deliverances of conscience and the actions based upon them are exemplary. The exemplary- based ethics, unlike principle- based ethics, makes room for tolerance. If others fail to follow the example set by a satyagrahi, a satyagrahi does not indulge in their criticism however much he may be disappointed. But along with disappointment he should hope that others adopt the example some time in future, if not immediately and this hope is not simply a pious one but is based on a faith in the essential goodness of human nature. In addition, not to indulge in criticism in no way bars the moral agent to persuade others to see his point. This is because criticism can be bitter and persuasion is not. Persuasion involves standing on equal footing and a sense of care neither of which is associated with criticism. That is why criticism might generate bitterness but not persuasion. More importantly, the moral agent who goes in the direction of exemplar-based ethics is bound to question himself whether what he considers to be an exemplary act is really so. This means that Gandhian approach to morality entails that ethical life is a life of struggle with one self by means of sustained self-examination, and not a mere a life of self-satisfaction. In fact, the Gandhian approach does not leave room for moral self-righteousness and the oppressiveness born of moral Puritanism.

Does Gandhi's radical alternative to modern moral theory lead to subjectivism? It does not. There is a trans-subjective element at the core of Gandhian ethical theory. This is brought out very well in Gandhi's own words: "When one chooses for oneself, *one sets an example to everyone*." (quoted in Bilgrami, *ibid*:112) Further, what is central to moral life is the belief that the faith in the value of moral up-rightness is self-propagating. Bilgrami brings out the point clearly when he says:"The good conceived in this way as exemplarily, breaks out of the subjectivity

of one's own conscience." (*ibid*) This answers the question whether Gandhi's ethics is individualist or communitarian. At one level Gandhi is individualistic in the straight forward sense that conscience, unlike a principle, is individual-specific, though we may speak of a community's conscience in a metaphorical way. What is said above shows how Gandhi while being an individualist transcends individualism by means of the concept of exemplariness without lapsing into communitarianism. The exemplary action by its very nature transcends an individual from whose conscience it flowed. Yet, to the extent Gandhi distances himself from communitarian ethics associated with pre-modern societies, his position is individualistic. This is very well brought out when he says "swaraj has to be experienced by each individual for himself". (quoted in Parel, Anthony, 2002:109) This gives an entry point into fundamentals of his social theory in which an individual occupies a central place. Before we do so, we may note that though for Gandhi the moral choice has ultimately to be made by individuals, morality is not a personal matter. To ward off any impression to the contrary Gandhi relates ethics and politics in a way Tagore, for example, did not. For Gandhi, as Ashish Nandy says, "politics was a means of real testing the ethics appropriate to our times and was therefore crucial to one's moral life. Everyone did not have to be an active politician, but everyone, Gandhi felt, had to work within a framework in which politics had a special place." (1994:81) After all, what is more impersonal than engaging in the politics of liberation? Politics in his hands became ethics made visible and palpable.

As pointed out earlier, Gandhi gave a central place to the individual in his ethical theory and therefore in his social theory. But Gandhi's individual stands directly in opposition to the individual of modern theory of individualism. Central to the individualist theory of individual is the notion of rights. In that theory central to the

individual is autonomy and central to that autonomy was possession of rights. And hence, rights constitute the core of the dignity of the individual. As Taylor says: "What is peculiar to the modern West among such higher civilizations is that its favoured formulation for this principle of respect has come to be in terms of rights. This has become central to our legal systems..." (1989:11) These rights are considered to be natural in the sense that the individuals are born with these rights and they are not bestowed on them by an agency like state or society or even God. Duty has a derivative existence. It consists in observing that while perusing my rights I do not come in the way of others exercising their rights. Gandhi completely rejects this idea. For him, individual is not the locus of rights but of duties. Rights are not given to us but they are acquired by performing our duties. Hence, duties come first. This is very well brought in his letter dated October 17, 1947 to Julian Huxley who wanted to elicit his views on rights in connection with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is worth quoting what Gandhi wrote in this connection: "I learned from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved come from a duty well done. The very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of the citizenship of the world. From this one fundamental statement perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of man and woman and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be usurpation hardly worth fighting for." (1969:99, vol.97) This means that an individual is a seat of conscience which dictates duties to him or her by performing which he earns the rights and not a repository of pre-given rights with minimal duties to be taken note of while pursuing his rights.

V.5. Gandhi on Nationalism

It may be noted that the radical character of Gandhi's critical response to modernity expresses itself either by rejecting or even repudiating certain central ideas germane to modernity or giving a fundamentally new content to those ideas of modernity which modernity itself cannot even figure out, let alone anticipate. Examples of the former kind we have seen in connection with Gandhi's ideas of nature and knowledge as well as truth. Example of the latter kind we have seen in the idea of individual to which Gandhi gives a content completely antithetical to what modernity had given. One more example of the latter kind is that of nationalism. As we all know, nationalism is peculiarly a modern concept. But it is one of the central ideas of Gandhi's political philosophy both in theory and practice. The way Gandhi provides a non-modern content to the modern idea of nationalism and thereby add to his critique of modernity becomes evident when we contrast his view of nationalism with that of Tagore. Both were embodiments of patriotism and their thoughts were the fountainhead of India's anti-imperialist struggle. As Nandy points out ,"For both,…, Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of only nationalist consolidation; it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity." (1994:2-3) Further, "Both recognized the need for a 'national' ideology of India as a means of cultural survival and both recognized that, for the same reason, India would either have to make a break with the post-medieval western concept of nationalism or give the concept a new content." (1994:2) Tagore took the former option and Gandhi the latter. This is because Gandhi was confident that India will work out an idea of nationalism which is completely at variance with its western counterpart which was inseparable from imperialism. According to Gandhi, "Violent nationalism, otherwise known as imperialism, is the curse. Non-violent

nationalism is a necessary condition of corporate or civilized life." (quoted in Nandy, *ibid*:8) Gandhi's confidence in India's ability to develop an alternative nationalism was rooted in his own thinking. First of all, he was absolutely clear that Indian conception of nationalism must be non-adversarial. He was aware that the nationalism of imperialist countries justified the plunder of the colonized to make that plunder acceptable and even respectable to their own people. On the other hand, the colonized people worked out nationalism that blamed their masters for their victimhood. In the hands of Gandhi, nationalism does not make room for condemning the British for India's plight. Indians should blame themselves rather than the colonial masters. This is the gist of chapter VII of the *Hind Swaraj* titled 'Why was India lost?' He says very significantly "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them." (2009:48) He continues: "We keep the English in India for our base self-interest. We like their commerce, they please us by their subtle methods, and get what they want from us. To blame them for this is to perpetuate their power. We further strengthen their hold by quarreling amongst ourselves" (*ibid*:40) over our petty and sectarian vested interest. Hence, nationalism can be made a means of self-criticism rather than blaming others. Secondly, he had the conviction that the Indian civilization, or better the Indic civilization, had capacity to supersede the idea of a nation-state which is inseparable from nationalism. In other words, nationalism can be suitably transformed to provide an avenue to rebuild India as a civilization in terms of a moral community whose members are more than citizens meeting the demands made on them by the nation state. Thus, Gandhi's concept of nationalism demands its own transcendence. It is in this sense Nandy is right in saying: "for Gandhi, nationalism began to include a critique of nationalism." (*ibid*:2) Tagore was not very optimistic about such a transcendence, unlike Gandhi. Nandy traces this difference between them to the difference they

had regarding the source of India's cultural resourcefulness. For Tagore, "Vedantic Hinduism was the real core of Hinduism and the basis of all social and political activism. Few were sensitive to the elitism and defensiveness implicit in such Vedanticism." (1994:77) This is because Tagore looked at India from the point of view of India's 'high culture' constituted by classical Sansritic traditions along with some elements of European classicism though he made room for folk traditions. In opposition to this Gandhi based himself on little/folk traditions of India with classicism granted room occasionally. For him, those little cultures of India constituted India's "last line of defense against the colonizing West. They became a major source of resistance against what Tagore identified as the pathologies of nationalism... Gandhi was willing to build upon the contradiction between the nationalism which entered India as an imperial category and nationalism which sprang out of democratic aspirations" (*ibid*:77) of ordinary Indians rooted in the native soil of folk traditions. When he was asked the question whether nation itself was a construction he hit back by asking the question: "It is constructed out of what?" It is clear that Gandhi meant that the idea of nationalism which he has nurtured is constructed out of something very real, namely, the cultural and spiritual life-springs of ordinary Indians. This is what constitutes the basis of characterizing India of his dreams as "nationalist India". To quote Gandhi himself "India... will cease to be *nationalist India*, whatever else she may become, when she goes through the process of civilization in the shape of reproduction on that sacred soil of gun factories and the hateful industrialism which has reduced the people of Europe to a state of slavery." (Gandhi, 1963:244) Thus, nation and nationalism are not simply the sides of anti-imperialist struggle but are central to politics which is more than a secularized area of human engagement as modernity construes politics. It is in such a transformation of the modernist concept of nation/nationalism so as to be a integral part of India as a civilizational project

rather than mere a nation state that constitutes the most profound element in Gandhi's critique of modernity to capture some of the facets of which was the aim of this chapter.

Chapter VI. Concluding Remarks: Tolstoy and Gandhi

As this thesis has dealt with the critiques of modernity particularly offered by Tolstoy and Gandhi, it is in the fitness of things that we conclude with recapitulating their critiques dealt with in the last two chapters and augmenting them with additional points. This may be more effectively done by delineating both commonalities and differences that can be found between the two critiques of modernity. Before we come to the commonalities we may point out the distinct takes they had regarding modernity. Gandhi looked at modernity through the prism of imperialism to which India was subjected. Of course, unlike other anti-imperialists, he looked at imperialism not simply as a forcibly imposed reign of a foreign country called Britain but as an enslavement by a satanic civilization which was an embodiment of violence, in particular, on the dignity of Indian people who were degraded by a morally corrupt civilization. Tolstoy did not have to look at modernity through imperialism, but through the political violence of the ruling classes and their henchmen on the ordinary people in whose name that violence was perpetrated. Such a violence was completely antithetical to the law of love enshrined in the spiritual aspirations of the ordinary people. Thus, Gandhi's perspective on modernity is located in his perception of bondage which is the negation of freedom which he calls 'swaraj', whereas in the case of Tolstoy the perspective is placed within what he considers to be the negation of the basis of human life, namely, Love.

However, the difference in their takes brings them together to their conviction that modern civilization's main faultline lies in its having violence as its essence. Undoubtedly, pre-modern societies were not completely non-violent. But the magnitude and the efficiency of the instruments of violence in modern society has no parallel in history. Such a violence is institutionalized by the emergence of the

nation-states. Both Tolstoy and Gandhi rejected scientific humanism as an adequate theory of human nature. This is because they rejected the theoretical underpinnings of modern science regarding both nature and man. They both rejected the idea of a de-sacrilized nature bereft of all meanings and values. They championed, on the other hand, the idea of man as primarily a spiritual being and consequently the idea of a moral and spiritual bond between man and nature. Obviously, their critiques, unlike most of the critiques of modernity, were totally religious. However, even while being religious they distanced themselves from other religious critiques of modernity. Both of them were against institutionalized religion as well as intellectualized religion of the learned people. For both of them religion was experiential in the sense it was personal rather than what is handed over by a scholastic tradition nurtured by a corporate body. However, both of them steered clear of the idea of religion as a private matter, an idea which is quite germane to modernity. This they did by linking religion with what they thought to be the spiritual affirmation of the ordinary, that is, religious consciousness of the folk. Tolstoy who considers religious authority to be as abominable as scientific humanism indicted the former as being in collusion with interest of the powerful by deluding the ordinary people with false hopes through the textual and oral communications of the religious preachers. In a similar way, Gandhi too realized how "the Brahmanical ideologies that had erected these corrupted interpretations into an orthodoxy. What he saw was the privilege accorded to spiritual knowledges would and had made alliances with other worldly forces to corner … for the privileged in society, the knowledges by which *governance* is made possible. It is this *vanguard of rule* that *Shramanical* (ascetic) ideals of popular Hinduism opposed, for it is the notion of God's availability to the visions of all who inhibit his earth … from which Gandhi's democratic tendencies grew." (Bilgrami, Akeel, 2011:110) It is to be noted in this connection that some of the leading thinkers who

are Gandhi's predecessors or contemporaries presented Vedanta as enshrined in philosophical works to be the essence of Hinduism. Further, the critiques of modernity offered by both Tolstoy and Gandhi had strong Christian element in it. In the case of Tolstoy that element was constituted by the central teachings of Christ. In the case of Gandhi, who was by birth and conviction a Hindu, we find strong echoes of the very voice which Tolstoy considered the spiritual font. Continuing what he says in the passage quoted above, Bilgrami points out that Gandhi's democratic tendencies which he derived from popular Hinduism "were fortified by his reading of the New Testament with its expression (especially in the Sermon on the Mount) of noble sentiments of trust in the judgment of ordinary (rather than privileged) people." (*ibid*) In fact, he is supposed to have found the idea of non-violence which he considers to be one of the two antidotes to modernity more positively expressed in Christianity than in Buddhism or Jainism. However, the significance Gandhi attached to Christianity which he not only differentiated from but also juxtaposed it with modern western civilization has an added importance. Christianity attracted many Indians who looked up to modernity as an ideal because they thought the Christianity was the religion of modern Western society. As Bhupendranath Dutta points out, it was thought by many Indians that Western civilization owed its power to Christian missionaries. The Indian intellectuals "equated the new western civilization with Christianity to establish the superiority of their civilization and religion… Consequently, seeing the poor state of their own religion and race, many Hindus were attracted to Christianity. …" (quoted in A. Nandy, 1994:55) Dutta, as Nandy points out, was categorical in stating that Christian missionaries "often rubbed this in." (*ibid*) In fact, the Christian missionaries sought to use science in an attempt to debunk native religious traditions. They considered that the introduction of science education was the first step towards the Christian emancipation of the heathens of

India from their own religion. For example, Alexander Duff brought out the journal *Culcutta Review* to spread the idea that secular education was "a species of religious education". He maintained that "if in India you only import useful knowledge, you thereby demolish what its people regarded as sacred. A course of instruction that professes to convey truth of any kind thus becomes a species of religious education in such land." (quoted in Dermot, Killingly, 1995:177) What is significant to note is that Gandhi saw through this strategy of the missionaries for promoting modernity and recognized the false impression it created in the mind of some Indians. Against this he came out with an understanding of Christianity which made Christian religion part of his arsenal to fight modernity as anti-Christian.

We now come to the fundamental differences between Tolstoy's critique of modernity and that of Gandhi. We may focus in this connection on questions of economy and polity. Tolstoy was convinced that the cure for the disease called 'modernity' with violence at its core lay only in the spiritual transformation by means of love, love for God and love for fellow human beings; everything else was secondary and even harmful. In fact, as Tolstoy says: "In the spiritual realm nothing is indifferent: what is not useful is harmful". (2009:15) The social, economic and political transformation which according to Tolstoy was the aim of modern social philosophers committed to scientific humanism such as Comte, Strauss, Spenser, Renan and others was bereft of a spiritual view of world and man. They construed 'the chief activity 'of our times as "the amelioration of *external* political, social and above all else, economic conditions' of life." (quoted in Parel, Anthony J, 2002:100, emphasis added) Tolstoy asserts "Let all those *external* alterations be realized and the position of humanity would not be bettered". (*ibid*, emphasis added). Such reformers wanted "the fruit without the

root." (*ibid*) So, social, economic and political engagement is, according to Tolstoy, only of *external*, i.e extrinsic significance whereas only the spiritual transformation of our life is of *internal*, i.e. intrinsic significance. In his view the former has only a peripheral role, if at all, whereas the latter is the essence of a genuine emancipation from modernity.

However, Gandhi fundamentally differed from Tolstoy on this point. For Gandhi, unlike for Tolstoy, the critique of modernity must express itself in social practice, that is, the collective life. In other words, he did not want to recognize the invidious distinction between the external and the internal. That is why he sought to provide the idea of an economy which was antithetical to that of modernity. Of course, he puts forth those ideas in terms of what he calls the 'reform' of the modern economy. Central to his economic vision was the idea of decentralized production, self-sufficiency of rural communities and local market. In his economic scheme heavy industries located in urban areas were only of marginal and minor significance. By emphasizing exclusively heavy industries located in urban areas and glorifying city life, modern economy has brought about pauperization of villages resulting in making villages dependent on goods and services of the urban world. He approved the term 'villagism' coined by Bharatan Kumarappa to characterize Gandhi's economic scheme. According to Gandhi, all western ideologies such as capitalism, socialism and communism which swear by centralized and city-based production with heavy machinery that have replaced human labor as the chief factor of production have declared their bankruptcy. The type and magnitude of economic inequality brought about by modern production is the worst kind of violence. Gandhi was not against industry. He was against modern exclusion of village production from 'industry'. In his economic scheme a

society can have industries without transforming itself into in an industry with industrialism as its reigning ideology.

Gandhi's refusal to accept Tolstoy's invidious distinction between external and internal engagement in the struggle against modernity becomes equally palpable in the primacy he accorded to the political. This puts him not only against Tolstoy but also against Tagore who, though a great patriot and an anti-imperialist, refused to be political. As Nandy rightly points out "Tagore refused to grant primacy to politics even while sometimes participating in politics. Here lays his basis difference with Gandhi, to whom politics was a means of testing the ethics appropriate to our times and was therefore crucial to one's moral life. Everyone did not have to be an active politician, but everyone, Gandhi felt, had to work within a framework in which politics had a special place." (1994:81) On his part Tagore construed all politics to be centered around institutions of the state even when it is a struggle against the state and statecraft. He, hence, "did not recognize any link between politics and morality, unless morality was willing to articulate itself as a political force so that it could not be ignored as a significant presence in political calculation. Gandhi understood this and was perfectly willing to politicize his moral stance, though on moral grounds, not political." (*ibid*)

It may be noted that there is some tension in Tolstoy between his opposition to politics and his idea of struggle against modernity. No doubt, he was firm that only antidote against modernity was the cultivation of love as thought by original Christianity which enables us to realize the kingdom of God in us. The promotion of kingdom of God lies in relentlessly propagating the idea of love which is antithetical to violence. However, Tolstoy might have realized that his solution to modernity was too idealistic and impractical. What Anthony Parel says in this connection is very pertinent: "The thought must have surely crossed his mind. That

is why … he introduced a second means to non-violence. He called this second means public opinion." (2002:101) Parel quotes in this connection Tolstoy's own words: "the moral progress of humanity is accomplished not only by a recognition of truth, also by the establishment of public opinion." (quoted in *ibid*) In other words, attainment of the spiritual truth of love must be accompanied by a strong public opinion in favor of it. However, Tolstoy seems to overlook the fact that public opinion of the required kind cannot be generated and sustained by merely mass media; it needs a struggle of the people on a larger scale against the institutions of coercion and for strengthening the institutions that promote equality and dignity. And it is where the need for genuine politics as distinct from power politics emerges and this is what Gandhi realized. Politics, therefore, becomes an arena of activity that results in the self-education of people whose aspirations are guided by moral sensitivity and sense of practicality. The realization of this truth which Tolstoy dimly saw and its realization in practice is what distinguishes Gandhi's critique of modernity and consequently his vision of an alternative from his predecessors, contemporaries as well as successors. This explains why many contemporary movements against either modernity as a whole or what they consider to be the excesses of modernity swear by the name of Gandhi, be they against war or environmental degradation, even while treating the critiques of thinkers like Tolstoy to be profound.

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