

CONNECTING EAST AND WEST: A DISCOURSE ON THE SYNTHETIC INTERPRETATION OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a socio-philosophical critique of the concept of culture. It is argued that centrality of the notion of culture owes its theoretical legitimacy to the peculiar cultural and historical developments which took place in the Western Europe connected with French revolution, Enlightenment and Industrial revolution. The modern culture as understood and interpreted in contemporary texts of cultural sciences happens to be the direct philosophical consequence of these intellectual developments. The concept of culture replaced the philosophical primacy of medieval Christian worldview and in turn was established to explain and interpret social reality for the modern Western societies in particular and the rest of the world societies in general. These societies although deeply rooted in religious foundations of culture, nonetheless, were influenced and shaped by the Western philosophical discourse through the political and technological forces of colonization and modernization.

The philosophical discourses commonly originate in questions of different sort and their answers. This questioning began with Socrates of ancient Greece. His illustrious disciple and seminal thinker, Plato, preserved his method in his classic collection of philosophical literature, namely, "Dialogues." This method came to be known as 'dialectics.' Since then 'dialectics' have become the *modus operandi* of major philosophical discourses in the history of human thought.

Dialectics, thus, constitute a line of thinking invented by a great mind. It also became the culture of philosophical discourses and almost all major philosophers of ancient and modern times employed 'dialectical' technique in the formulation of their philosophical discourses. This dialectical technique

goes a long way in shaping the content as well as forms of structures of human thought. Arguments and counter-arguments are initiated by deploying this technique. This technique also constitutes 'cultura intellectus' of philosophical discourses and right opinion about different problematic can be inferred by using it. Furthermore, the interaction of different minds is made possible through it.

Dialectical technique acts not only as a cultura intellectus in philosophical discourses, it also operates as a point of interaction of minds of contradictory values. In short, to apply a Wittgensteinian phrase, philosophical discourses provide intellectual battleground for conflicting 'forms of life,'²⁴ or in Husserlian terms a clash of encountering 'lebenswelt'²⁵ or in Max Scheler's words a 'cultura amini'²⁶ of mankind. In this way, dialectical activity becomes a disclosure of discourses in mind, history, life, strategy, action, symbols; a kind of texture of human thought expressed in pure forms as well as concrete shapes.

Dialectical activity thus, becomes 'por soi'²⁷ of individual as well as collectivity of individuals, in a movement of discourses, of point of views encountered, inferred, explained, validated or refuted. Therefore, dialectical activity divulges us not only ontology of intuitions about good, justice, mathematics or music but also an epistemology of experience, in which knowledge of objects, artifacts, nature and history are contested and demonstrated. Plato displays the classic application of dialectical activity in his famous 'analogy of cave,'²⁸ as a pre-condition of 'cultura intellectus' and also a sui-generis of human condition, without which, no knowledge is possible and hence no culture is envisioned.

Culture is a 'state of knowledge,'²⁹ a dialectical shift between knowing and not knowing, between action and thought, between labyrinth and surface; a

²⁴ Wittgenstein, L. (1981), *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, Basil and Blackwell Publishers.

²⁵ Bell, D. (1991), *Husserl*, London, Routledge Press.

²⁶ Scheler, F.Max. (1958), *Husserl*, Boston, Beacon Press.

²⁷ Sartre, J.P. (1956, *Being and Nothingness*, tr.Barnes, H., University of Colorado Press.

²⁸ Kaplan, J.D. (Ed). (1955), *Dialogues of Plato*, New York, Pocket Book Company.

²⁹ Cassirer, E. (1965), *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (vol,1-3),Yale University Press.

Malquidian ‘parchment’³⁰ bordering on signs and their (un)decipherability. One can see, here, (inter)courses of fact and imagination mingling in the heart of philosophical discourses; epistemological and ontological dimensions intersperse in the ‘dasien’³¹ of dialectical activity. Now discourse in philosophy can take on subtle and variegated dialectical forms. All these (dis)courses are about concepts, in different configurations, in different contexts and employed for different usages. For example, what is number? What is beauty? What is truth? What is life? In addition to that, what is society and culture? These are some of the questions, which lead to dialectically engaging discoveries of philosophical discourses.

Let us perform our philosophical analysis of the question; what is number? The adequate reply to this question assumes some sort of primitive awareness of the concept of number on the part of the inquirer. The satisfactory analysis shall depend upon a number of complementary factors such as its root, usage, context, relationship, succession, etc. Points of view of inquirer intrinsically have profound influence upon his construction of adequate concept of number. For example, when one says, what is the concept of number in modern (Western) arithmetic? and what is the concept of number in Mayan arithmetic? Notwithstanding, the fact that one is inquiring about a common concept, *i.e.* number in both questions, but one’s reply may not satisfy the epistemic quest of inquirer. Therefore, one can safely state that a single answer cannot be supplied for both the questions.

This in any way, does not, endanger the rational foundations of modern mathematical knowledge of the West and its practitioners all around the world, rather, on the contrary it proves the *latent* complexities of human mind and its rational functions. Only perhaps a human being can simultaneously talk about rational / irrational numbers. Prof. Heisenberg has given a characteristic description of pluralistic uses of reason deployed to describe an aspect of physical reality and the imaginative *thirst* quenched by the humans by doing it. He says:

³⁰ Marquez, G.Garcia. (1970), *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Harper and Row, New York.

³¹ Heidegger, M. (1967), *Time and Being*, New York, Simon and Schuster.

The most important new result of nuclear physics was the recognition of the possibility of applying quite different types of natural laws, without contradiction, to one and the same physical event. This is due to the fact that within a system of laws which are based on certain fundamental ideas only certain quite definite ways of asking questions make sense, and thus, that such a system is separated from other which allow different questions to be put.³²

This remark by Heisenberg, clearly demonstrates the pluralistic paradigm of rationality, employed by theoretical physicists, for studying a *physical* event, what to speak of a *cultural* event? Moreover, what is important, in a characteristic anti-Kantian sense, to ask ‘different questions’ for a single physical system, just by moving away from the *fundamental* ideas, about that ‘event’ grounded in older physical theories? ‘Different questions’ are in fact different points of views, different ‘*cultural*’ worlds, or to employ a Gadamerian concept, “prejudice against prejudice”³³ about a single interpretation of physical and cultural reality. The theoretical *prejudices* of quantum mechanics are positive prejudices against the Newtonian mechanics and a clear demonstration of epistemological *de jure* in relation to the hard and fast Kantian ‘a priorism’ of universalized interpretation of postulates of classical mechanics or mathematics.

However, to have a philosophically satisfactory reply to the question: What is number? It is necessary on the part of the inquirer to be clear about threefold but interconnected condition.

He/She should be clear about the point of view or *cultural* paradigm from which he is inquiring about the concept of number (or one may replace number with any other concept).

He/She should carry out proper *context* analysis of his question.

He/She should try to understand the concept of number historically as well as etymologically.

³² Calhoun, C. (1995), *Critical Social Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp.8.

³³ Gadamer, H.G. (1989), *Truth and Method*, Sheed and Ward, London.

Ostensibly, point of view or cultural paradigm is very important and basic in our understanding of our relationship with reality or ‘multiple realities,’ as Carlos Castaneda has asserted. Let us state two different philosophical discourses from two leading philosophers of our times; Russell and Wittgenstein. This is to show how point of view or cultural paradigm influences the dialectical conditions of their respective discourses and the logical preferences deployed by them. In characteristic logical style, Russellian discourse is thus reflected in the following passage taken from the Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy. Russellian point of view or cultural paradigm shall be evident by a close reading of this discourse. Russell writes,

The questions what is number? Is one that has been often asked, but has only been correctly answered, in our time? Frege gave the answer in 1884, in his ‘Grundlagen der Arithmetick.’ Although this book is quite short, not difficult, and of the very highest importance, it attracted almost no attention and the definition of number which it contains remained practically until it was rediscovered by the present author in 1901...³⁴

After this historical-etymological brief, Russell then moves on with an unequivocal tone to next phase of his discourse. He thus writes:

In seeking a definition of number, the first thing to be clear about is what we may call the grammar of our inquiry. Many philosophers, when attempting to define number, are really setting to define plurality, which is quite a different thing. Number is what is characteristic of men. A plurality is not an instance of number, but of some particular number. A trio of men, for example, is an instance of the number 3, and the number 3 is an instance of number; but the trio is not an instance of number. This point may seem elementary and scarcely worth meaning; yet has it proved too subtle for the philosophers, with few exceptions.³⁵

³⁴ Castaneda, C. (1962), *Don Juan: The Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, California, Granta Press.

³⁵ Russell, B. (1978), *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, London, Allen and Unwin, pp.11.

After outlining, his ‘grammar of inquiry’³⁶ (or we may term it as *cultural* paradigm on his concept of number). Russell attempts at length the analysis of the concept of number; this is only at the termination of his discourse, that a definition of number is formulated and given to the reader.³⁷ He, thus, defines number after classifying and interconnecting such notions as ‘collectives’, ‘similar,’ ‘symmetrical,’ ‘reflexive,’ ‘converse domain,’ and ‘class’ etc. in the following manner:

A number is anything which is the number of same class.”³⁸ Suppose, we change the Russellian ‘grammar of inquiry’ and replace it with another ‘grammar of inquiry,’ say Mayan ‘grammar of inquiry’ or Islamic ‘grammar of inquiry’; or we may shift theoretical paradigm from ‘logical atomism’ to ‘intuitionism.’ While defining the concept of number, our conclusion would be entirely different from that of Russell but equally valid, under conditions of cultural paradigm reflecting a particular ‘grammar of inquiry’ employed for the said purpose.

The pluralistic theoretical constructions of concepts are perfectly legitimate and equally valid, but one must be on guard against the relativistic strain present in the pluralistic sensibility. Even Russell was unable to override the existence and influence of pluralistic *cultural* paradigm— in defining the number, although, he excluded the very mirage of ‘plurality’ in the beginning of his discourse.³⁹

In the dialectical movement of concepts in discourse, two activities are very important and play a significant role in constructing an image of physio-cultural reality. These are:

³⁶ Ibid, pp.11.

³⁷ This definition may not satisfy those who conceptualize number from intuitionist point of view. See Cassirer, E., *The Problem of Knowledge; Philosophy, Science and Religion since Hegel*.

³⁸ cf. Introduction to *Mathematical Philosophy*, pp.10-11.

³⁹ Ibid, pp.19. Russell further comments, “ In Christian countries, the relation of husband to wife is one-one. In Mahometon countries it is one to many; in Tibet it is many to one. The relation of father to son is one to many; that of son to father is many to one, but that of eldest son to father is one to one”.

The linguistic structures of discourses.

The hermeneutical principle employed for intellectual-cultural '*versthen*.'

Thus linguistic-hermeneutic dialectical activities of discourses pervade almost all forms of philosophical stylistics. The consistent and continuous movement of dialectical strategy—lying deep in textual complexes—inner and outer form of discourses; hyperbole, punctuations, hyphens, commas, gestures, dresses, etiquettes, all acoustic signs mould into a mode of life— or a culture. Thus, leading us to a kind of creative ecstasy of experiencing our 'selves' as part of a 'lebenswelt',⁴⁰ which is simultaneously a residue of and expose of life-forms, cultures and cosmologies. This linguistic-hermeneutic dialectical strategy, characterizing discourses of 'lebenswelt' is rooted in what Wittgenstein has described as 'grammatical difference'.⁴¹

Let me illustrate what this 'grammatical difference' means from a characteristic Wittgensteinian discourse in 'Philosophical Investigations' (p. 193: 1981). He writes,

We are interested in the concept (of cube) and its place among the concepts of experience. You could imagine the illustration appearing in several places in a book, a textbook for instance. In the relevant text something *different* is in question every time; here a glass cube, there an inverted open box, there a wire frame of that shape, there three boards forming a solid angle. Each time the *text* supplies the interpretation of the illustration. But, can also see the illustration now as one thing now as another. So we *interpret* it, and see it as we interpret it.⁴²

Not only 'seeing' an object (or perhaps 'seeing' a concept like 'Flag,' or 'Church' or 'Mosque') is basic to our epistemic '*versthen*' but also 'seeing' objects / concepts *differently* and 'interpreting' each 'seeing' *differently* constitute the hermeneutical principle of acute generality of concepts and objects. However, every 'seeing' and *hermeneutical* principle used to explain it

⁴⁰ Husserl,E. (1989), On Phenomenology,

⁴¹ Wittgenstein.L. (1981), Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, Basil and Blacwell, pp.185.

⁴² Ibid, pp.193.

is covered by the *internal* structures of the text– and human discourses. Such is the richness of Wittgensteinian imagery that one finds language liberated spontaneously from the singularities of monolithic epistemological squabbles about concepts and the grounds of ontological-psychological cognizance of their non-difference from each other. In Wittgenstein, at last, Western epistemology realizes it's most basic relationship with language– manifest tool of discourses in literature, philosophy, science and society– by comprehending the centrality of text in human culture and its *intrinsic* hermeneutic variability while in the process of understanding it. Language becomes self-conscious as a mode of discourses *pluralistically*, differentially, non-conformistically according philosophical legitimacy to different or *non-Western* epistemologies and critiquing the rational foundations of modern Western texts of Kantian *type* and thus exposing their '*kulturpsyche*' and the destruction they wrought for the acquisition of knowledge – or recognition of different forms of knowledge and the '*kulturpsyche*' they support.⁴³

II

Immanuel Kant posited the problematic of modern theory of knowledge in *Kritik Der Reinen Vernunft*, wherein he announced his 'Copernican Revolution,' by establishing the unquestionable rule of 'discipline of pure reason,' in the domain of epistemological construction of the grounds of human experience. By employing a singular methodological sweep, Kant successfully places 'pure reason' at he centre of modern texts of science, literature, politics, history, life and world – and thus a uniform discourse of modern Western culture is achieved by him.⁴⁴ He discloses the dialectical

⁴³ Rorty, R. (1980), *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, pp-3. He writes, "Philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. It can do so because it understands the foundations of knowledge, and it finds these foundations in a study of man-as-knower, of the "mental process", or the "activity of representation" which make knowledge possible. To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind. So to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which mind is able to construct such representations. Philosophy's central concern is to be a general theory of representations, a theory, which will divide culture up into areas which represent reality well, those which represent it less well, and those which do not represent it all despite their pretense of doing so".

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp.475.

processes of 'pure reason' in subtle and lucid style that one is magically drawn to them, because his discourses and its textual complexities not only present a technique of acquiring and critiquing claims of knowledge independently of one's subjective considerations; but also constructs before our eyes the image of man, interrelationships, values system and outlook to cosmos and society. Let us reproduce one of his discourses from '*Kritik*'; which clearly demonstrates dialectical structure of his texts and the world it constructs – or represents to us.

Allow, therefore, your opponent to speak in the name of reason, and combat him only with weapons of reasons. For the rest, have no anxiety as to the outcome in its bearing upon practical interests, since in a merely speculative dispute they are never in any way affected. The conflict serves only to disclose a certain antinomy of reason, which is as much due to the very nature of reason, must receive a hearing and scrutinized. Reason benefits by the consideration of its object from both sides, and its judgment correlated in being thus limited. What are in dispute are the practical interests of reason but the mode of their reproduction. For although we have to surrender the language of knowledge, we still have sufficient ground to employ, in the presence of the most exacting reason, the quite legitimate language of a firm faith.⁴⁵

In this fashion, Kantian point of view becomes the standard view or valid *weltanschauung* of modern Western culture. Kant thus presented the problematic of epistemological project to modern mind to mould all kinds of epistemic inquiries on the model of Newtonian classical mechanics. Every phenomena (excluding only the Kantian noumena or a *priori* status of geometrical, arithmetical axioms), be it biological, physical, geological, historical, cultural, has to be explained in subjective / objective epistemic categorization; a description of timeless, ordered, given and objective pattern of natural and social world. This 'Newtonian world-view',⁴⁶ pervaded every domain of inquiry, wherein man, the knower with his discipline of 'pure reason,' operate upon the impure domains of phenomena; and by virtue of this intellectual operation, he achieved the representation of true reality. This

⁴⁵ Kant, I. (1920), Critique of Pure Reason, .Tr, N.K.Smith, London, Macmillan, pp-597.

⁴⁶ Prigogine, I. (1984), Order out of Chaos, Chicago, Chicago University Press.

intellectual operation is completely objective, devoid of personal likes / dislikes of known, his moral and ethical consideration; in short, a thorough mental autonomy, which produces 'real' knowledge for humankind is achieved. For physics, physiology, morphology, ethics, sociology, economics, culture, history, and anthropology, *objectivity* became the criterion for scientific and positivistic accounts of knowledge.⁴⁷ This universalization of 'objectivity' of knowledge and logical grounds, on which it stood, was the dialectics of political polemics of 'philosophies' of the Enlightenment. Therefore, Enlightenment was not only the '*l'ecraze le'infame*' of political edifice of monarchy in Europe, but also the '*l'ecraze le'infame*' of scholastic epistemology and the Christian theology which gave *raison'd'etre* to the 'culture' (dogma!) of '*la'regime ancien*'. The polemics of philosophies was directed tirelessly to the dismantling of church and its principles.⁴⁸ and the power which it exercised as a 'world view' on the society, economy, morality, attitudes, and politics of men of '*la'ancien regime*.' The 'philosophies' led by Voltaire, Diderot, Kant and others ceaselessly rejected and refuted the claims of Christian 'lebenswelt' to social-cultural legitimacy and politico-moral authority, condemned it ruthlessly; all ills of European man and society were attributed to Christianity. They were not simply denying Christianity, its politico-moral hold over 'ancien regime'; in fact denial and refutation was more perverse and manifold; it was rejection of Christian discourses as *modus operandi* of interpretation of culture, a complete and systematic refutation of religious foundations of man, society, morality, and nature.⁴⁹ This was the

⁴⁷ Cassirer, E. (1978), *The Problem of Knowledge; Philosophy, Science and religion since Hegel*.

⁴⁸ Gay,P. (1967), *Enlightenment: an Interpretation*,

⁴⁹ Ibid; Gay writes, "The French took perverse pleasure in the opposition of Church and state to their campaigns for free speech and a human penal code, and to their polemics against 'superstition'."(*Overture*,pp.4) He further captures the culture of Enlightenment in these significant words, "The Enlightenment, then, was a single army with a single banner, with a large central corps, a right and left wing, doing scouts and lame strugglers--- but the cohesion among the philosophes went deeper than this: behind their tactical alliances and personal fellowship there stood a common experience from which they constructed a coherent philosophy. This experience- which marked each of the philosophes with greater or lesser intensity, but which marked them all- was dialectical interplay of their appeal to antiquity, their tension with Christianity, and their pursuit of modernity. This dialectic defines the philosophes and acts them apart from other enlightened men of their age; they, unlike others, used their classical learning to free from their Christian heritage, and then, having done with ancients, turned their face toward modern world view. The Enlightenment

birth of culture of modernity. The *weltanschauung* of modern culture was thus characterized after the works of Newton, Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Kant, Diderot, and Rousseau, as secularism, democracy, scientific knowledge, moral autonomy and individualism as the articulation of new world order.⁵⁰

We now see that Kant posited the problematic of modern culture epistemologically as well as morally and historically. In Enlightenment, Kant perceived both newfound liberation of ‘modern’ man and his imminent predicament of alienation. He thus articulated the project of modernity as unfolded in Enlightenment in his characteristic style. He stated that Enlightenment was a man’s emergence from his self-imposed tutelage, and offered, as its motto, *Sapere aude* – “Dare to know: take the risk of discovery, exercise the right of unfettered criticism, and accept the loneliness of autonomy.”⁵¹ This Kantian dialectics of modern culture works as the foundation of newfound post-Enlightenment Western worldview. Kantian discourse on dialectics of modern culture thus becomes arch-discourse linguistically and hermeneutically. This universalization of rationality as a paradigm of theory of knowledge as well as theory of culture becomes the grounded point of view of Western societies.⁵²

was a volatile mixture of classicism, impiety, and science; the philosophes, in a phrase, were Modern pagans.

⁵⁰ Cf; Gay, P, “ Shaftsbury himself, with his optimistic, worldly, aesthetic, almost feminine Platonism, exercised immense power over his readers: over the young Diderot; over Moses Mendelssohn, Wieland, and Kant; over Thomas Jefferson; all in search of a philosophy of nature less hostile to the things of this world than traditional Christian doctrine.” Furthermore he writes about the common values of Enlightenment in these words, “The men of the Enlightenment united on a vastly ambitious programme, a programme of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom, above all freedom in its many forms—freedom from arbitrary power, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realize one’s talents, freedom of aesthetic response, freedom, in a word of moral man to make his own way in the world”.

⁵¹ Kant, I., *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung*, Werke IV.169, cf; Peter Gay (1967), *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, pp-3.

⁵² Kantian philosophical discourse in ‘Kritik’ became the culture of modern thought and a discourse for modern culture. Will Durant has vividly explored the centrality of Kantian text in Western culture in these words, “Never has a system of thought so dominated an epoch as the philosophy of Immanuel Kant dominated the thought of the nineteenth century. After three-core years of quiet and secluded development, the uncanny Scot of Königsberg roused

Henceforth, Kantian dialectic of modern culture based Western societies on a practical interpretation of pure reason; a 'rational' theology of ethical behavior purged of repressive Church and dogmatic Christian theological disputes and an egalitarian society designed on equitable and just principle for all human beings.

Kant propounded a conception of civil society where citizens enjoyed 'freedom' and 'autonomy' as a logical corollary of common code of conduct rooted in a universal moral rational law of inner voice and rational distribution of opportunity – to live a free life. As he witnessed French Revolution (1789), unfolding before his eyes and the tremors it sent down the spine of all monarchies of Europe; he saw in it a hope of realizing a vision of a new rational civil and political order based on freedom and equality to all citizens. In posing freedom and autonomy as the fundamental forms of modern culture, he affected the nature and outcome of cultural discourses of Western moral and political make up. The Kantian notions of 'freedom' and 'autonomy' are essentially rationally construed concepts, defined for the construction of new civil society in Europe. Therefore, we see in Kantian discourse a conception of individual psychologically (as the question of autonomy pertains to this domain), elaborated as well as anthropologically and historically dilated (the question of freedom). The subsequent epistemological forms of cultural phenomena thus revolve around the dialectics of these two questions; what is freedom? And what is autonomy? The panacea, which Kant offered to these questions, was the establishment of a just and equitable democratic system, wherein people themselves decide about their destiny. "Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in him; and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being, to use him as a mere means for some external purpose."⁵³ Thus reason and instinct were synthesized by Kant in his discourse and he constructed an image of man as a free creature of his own rational '*verstehen*' of his being and knowledge, which he possesses of it. The cultural contradiction

the world from its 'dogmatic slumber', in 1789, with his famous critique of pure reason: and from that year to our own the 'critical philosophy' has ruled the speculative roost of Europe. *The Story of Philosophy*, 1971, pp-194. See also Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, on the centrality of Kantian text in Western culture, but from a different point of view than that of Will Durant.

⁵³ Kant, I., cit, in Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*, pp- 217.

of Enlightenment was thus philosophically posited by Kant to wonder about and resolve it. Man an end-in-himself became the reason's new invention of modern world.⁵⁴

III

Immanuel Kant thus precipitated '*Kulturbomerdgung*' by positing dialectic of '*Aufklärung*' (Enlightenment) in a tripartite structure of freedom, autonomy and liberal spirit of modern man.⁵⁵ He also propounded a discipline of 'reinen vernunft' to investigate the metaphysical (or transcendental to use Kant's phrase) conditions of this tripartite structure, its historical-cultural significance for modern '*weltanschauung*' and the culture it gave birth. '*Kulturbomerdgung*' of Kant and its 'dialectic' produced comprehensive tremors in the cultural life of Western societies,⁵⁶ which was unprecedented and remains central to the discourses of '*Kulturwissenschaften*' even today.⁵⁷ He influenced the philosophy of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and above all Hegel. It was in Hegel, that the clearest cultivation of 'dialectics' as a fundamental philosophical discourse became autonomous vis-à-vis an elaborate hermeneutical strategy to unlock the riddles of human mind, history, politics, aesthetics, science, and religion. His method was unique; he transformed Kantian 'dialectic' of propositions and judgments into a 'dialectics' of concepts, whereby a more true concept is generated from inadequate beginnings, through overcoming the oppositions intrinsic to them. Roger Scruton thus captures Hegelian dialectical methodology in these words

The dialectical process unfolds, and then as follows, a concept is posited as a starting point. It is offered as a potential description of reality. It is found at over that, from the standpoint of logic, this concept must bring its own negation with it: to the concept, its negative is added automatically, and a 'struggle' ensues between the two. The struggle is resolved by transcending to the higher plane from which it can be

⁵⁴ Gay, P.,(1967), *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp-3.

⁵⁶Scruton, R., (1991), *A Short History of Modern Philosophy*, London, Routledge, pp-138.

⁵⁷Adorno and Horkheimer, M. (2002), *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*.tr.by.Edmund Jephcott, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

comprehended and reconciled: this ascent is the process of ‘diremption’ (Aufhebung), which generates a new concept and of the ruins of the last. This new concept generates its own negation, and so the process continues, until by successive applications of the dialectic the whole of reality has been laid bare.⁵⁸

The most powerful expression of this dialectical unfolding of reality is to be found in historical process. The best possible forms of cultural experience are reflected in the ‘*zeitgeist*’ of historical process. History is a dialectical movement almost a series of revolutions, in which people after people and genius after genius, become the instrument of the Absolute. Such a philosophy of history seems to lead to revolutionary conclusions. The dialectical process makes change the cardinal principle of life; no condition is permanent; in every stage of things there is a contradiction which only the ‘strife of opposites’ can resolve. The deepest law of politics, therefore, is freedom – an open avenue to change; history is the growth of freedom and the state is, or should be, freedom organized.⁵⁹ This way, Hegel, propounded the most effective interpretation of history and society, in the dynamic process of dialectical movement of ideas and cultural forms. The Hegelian world-spirit (*Zeitgeist*) became transparent and unfolded in the rational processes of objective spirit of historico-political and religio-ethical struggles of mankind. The dialectical movement of ideas laid bare the rational structure of historical growth and forms of political organization. His dialects generated a permanent revolution in the social thought of Europeans. Intellectuals and revolutionaries alike become hostage of Hegelian method.

Now, if we look at the cultural existence of European societies, in the aftermath of Enlightenment and French Revolution, three distinct conceptions of forms of cultural existence can be clearly discerned. These are

Rousseausian conception of society and culture

Comtean conception, and

⁵⁸ Scruton, R., (1991), *A Short History of Philosophy*, London, Routledge, pp-168.

⁵⁹ Durant, Will, *The Story of Philosophy*, pp-226.

Marxian conception

Jean Jacques Rousseau, author of 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,' and 'Social Contract' conceived of absolute freedom and liberty for man and espoused the cause for the creation of such a society. He rejected the chorus of civilization, science, letters and progress. He viewed all these as chains of bondage for men. He pleaded for complete freedom from laws and controls. He propounded the romantic idea of a 'savage man'⁶⁰ who was completely free from cultural bondage. He said freedom for men could only be realized if he returned to his 'natural state', free from control and laws. This 'natural state' of raw culture can be realized through a radical overthrow of present state of social and cultural existence, thereby liberating man from bondage and enslavement. Rousseau propagated the revolutionary action as the *sine qua nire* for creating a free society of men, in which life is led by instinct and emotion instead of rigid and stale reason.⁶¹ He advocated a kind of hedonistic-naturalistic state of raw culture in which men enjoy freedom without sanction and lead a life of pleasure, instinct and self-indulgence. The 'irrationalism' of some post-modernist and the notion of 'unconscious' in Freud as a repository of psychological make-up of modern man can be traced back to this Rousseauian romanticization of forms of natural state of cultural existence.

Presumably, it was August Comte, who can be ranked as the most important social thinker, who lived and worked in the Post revolutionary France. He displayed the perfect application of Enlightenment rationality in his studies of forms of socio-cultural existence. He outlined a *positivistic* interpretation of the science of society, which became a dominant paradigm in the studies of socio-cultural phenomena in European academic world. He proposed that a positivistic study of socio-cultural phenomena is possible just as it has been achieved in the methods of natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, and biology. He thus states,

Science, in the sense of exact knowledge had spread from one subject matter to another..., and it was natural that complex phenomena of social

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp-186.

⁶¹ Ibid,pp-186-187.

life should be the last to yield to scientific method. In each field of thought the historian of ideas could observe a law of three stages: at first the subject was conceived in the theological fashion, and all problems were explained by the will of some deity – as when the stars were gods, or the chariots of gods; later. The same subject reached the metaphysical stage, and it was explained by metaphysical abstractions – as when the stars moved in circles because circles were the perfect figure. Finally the subject was reduced to positive science by precise observation, hypothesis, and experiment, and its phenomena were explained through the regularities of natural cause and effect.⁶²

This is how Comte tried to explain the development of scientific method and its uses in the interpretation of socio-cultural phenomena. He claimed that socio-cultural phenomena could be studied as objectively and scientifically as physical or chemical phenomena. Rather, he pleaded the case for a positivistic interpretation of social phenomena. He claimed that objective, observable, generalized, and natural laws governing the course of socio-cultural phenomena can be discovered by applying scientific techniques. Social facts/laws can be discovered and established as natural facts/laws can be discovered or established. His threefold categorization of human consciousness in interpreting and discovering general laws and patterns in nature, society, and other forms of cultural existence constitute a very significant tool for understanding forms of emerging social reality. This threefold theoretical categorization can help us study the forms of socio-cultural existence and the level of development they have achieved. By analyzing the conditions of different socio-cultural worlds of mankind, we can easily determine its state of development, i.e. whether the socio-cultural world is in theological state, metaphysical or positive state of affairs. This positivistic Comtean conception became almost the dominant paradigm for the studies of forms of cultural existence in the Industrial Europe and outside Europe. We find the influence of positivistic hermeneutic of Comte on the works of British Social theorists such as Radcliffe Brown, Malinowski, J.S.Mill, and on Emile Durkheim etc.

⁶² Ibid, pp-270.

Karl Marx is another important social thinker in the aftermath of Enlightenment. He twisted the Hegelian method of 'dialectical idealism' by applying Feurbachian materialism to it and thus invented a new hermeneutic of explaining the modes of cultural existence. He stated that forms of socio-cultural existence are reflections of the state of material conditions of a particular society. He argued that forms of human culture develop through class-wars and class-conflicts; in which state of material condition of a culture (or modes of production) determines the outcome of such struggle. He asserted that economic conditions determine the discourse of human culture, viz. attitudes, morality, religion, art, emotion, and value system etc. The prevalence of a form of cultural existence is the dialectical expression of state of economic or material modes of productions and the control over different material resources by different classes. Marx argued that, through the revolutionary *praxis* of proletariat; revolutionary consciousness can be organized, and subsequently, the capitalist society, its bourgeoisie values and dehumanized modes of production can be overthrown and replaced by a just socialistic mode of production and giving birth to a socialistic culture, a real human culture. In this way Marxist 'historical materialism' became a practical methodology for transformation of existing forms of cultural existence and creating new modes of cultural experiences. Marx thus retrieved the Hegelian 'dialectical idealism' from becoming a method in pure speculation in philosophy and history, to a revolutionary *praxis* of changing the oppressed masses of capitalist-industrialist society. In George Lukacs words, Marx identified the cultural existence of a 'reified,'⁶³ and 'dehumanized' man in an oppressive capitalist society, and showed a practical method of socially transforming this condition.

In addition to these cultural-theoretical developments in Western social thought; one important intellectual transformation is to be noted, which had basic role in shaping the values of modern culture and social system. This was the 'theory of evolution' formulated by Charles Darwin. Although his domain of inquiry was primarily biology; the results of his research were widely used in cultural and philosophical sciences, an evolutionary account of culture and cultural developments was undertaken by Herbert Spencer in the

⁶³ Lukacs, G., (1971), *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialects*, London, and Marlin Press.

first place. Subsequently, social scientists such as Leslie White and Gordon Childe,⁶⁴ tried to formulate an evolutionary interpretation of cultural phenomena. According to ‘social darwinianism,’ social-cultural forms developed from simple ones and gradually transformed into complex one. The level of technological sophistication indicated the corresponding level of socio-cultural complexities. All these intellectual currents of Western social thought precipitated the most urgent question of defining the autonomous intellectual domain of the concept of culture, man and cultural reality.

The earliest manifestations of autonomous studies in ‘Kulturwissenschaften’(cultural sciences) were undertaken by E. B. Taylor in England, Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber in Germany, Franz Boas in US, and Emile Durkheim in France. The cultural theoretical discourses generated by ‘*Aufklärung*’ become more articulated in these social scientists. However, ‘*Aufklärung*’ remained and remains a basic cultural-philosophical backdrop of modern conceptions of culture and ‘cultural sciences.’ It is a point of view of modernity and different from ‘ancien regime’ and the ‘weltanschauung’ which legitimized it.⁶⁵ Once, the significance of ‘*Aufklärung*’ (Enlightenment) is clearly understood which constitute a pivot of modern world; the conception of an autonomous ‘Kulturwissenschaften’ (cultural sciences) becomes totally clear. These new cultural sciences became a battleground of defining the identity of ‘new’ man; de-mystified, secularized and rationalized and grounded in the ‘new’ web of ‘lebenswelt,’ which he comes to live in and survive.

In this way, for Western social scientists and philosophers, the question of defining their own ‘modern culture’ became a question of paramount importance. Similarly the relationship of this ‘modern culture’ and its worldview with the other cultures, *viz.* Islamic or Japanese and Latin American also became politico-historically significant. This twofold

⁶⁴ White, L., (1945), *The Science of Culture*, and see also, Gordon, V.Childe, *What Happened in History?*

⁶⁵ *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment), as a cultural product of Western society, was also exported to the rest of the world. For example, Japan, encountered it as “Westernization”, during Meiji Era and Islamic Societies, in India, Turkey and Egypt, etc, through colonialism. In a certain way it became universal in its philosophical and cultural impact on non-western societies in Asia and Africa.

intellectual necessity led to an array of theoretical points of views emerging in the West and thus trying to provide explanatory ground to modern mind to cope with newfound world of experiences.

The concept of ‘culture’ was initially employed by German culture historians, such as Herder, Lanprecht, and Klemm, English anthropologist, E. B. Taylor and his American counterpart Franz Boas et al, as a unifying and central concept in the domain of ‘cultural sciences.’⁶⁶ The concept was used not only to understand and interpret sources of Western culture but also the dynamics of non-Western cultures.

Prof. Hans Georg Gadamer has underscored the importance of this point in the following words:

We must certainly admit that there are innumerable tasks of historical scholarship that have no relation to our own present and to the depths of its historical consciousness. But it seems to me there can be no doubt that the great horizon of the past, out of which our culture and our present life, influences us in everything we want, hope for, or yearn in the future.

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IV

Now what constitutes this ‘great horizon of the past,’⁶⁸ in the context of modern Western culture and its counterpart in the eastern hemisphere, that is, the Islamic culture (especially in the South Asian Subcontinent) in the wake of post-enlightenment period? Generally speaking enlightenment has become a universalized cultural paradigm for the contemporary *world-outlook* for both the Western and the Islamic world, with subtle variations and degrees of impact on each one of them. In the West European cultural systems, it brought about radical transformations at political, social, moral,

⁶⁶ Bagby, Phil, (1958), *Culture and History: Prolegomena to a Comparative Study of Civilizations*, London.

⁶⁷ Gadamer, G., cit., in the *Continental Philosophy Reader*, Keary, R and Raiawater, M (Eds), (1996), London, Routledge, pp-155.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp-155.

and technological levels. Christian dogma was rejected as a *culture* to fulfill the *needs* of new social-cultural order in West European societies. Complete freedom and autonomy of the individual was espoused as a ground for a new modern civil society in the Western world. Ecclesiastical and monarchic controls were ridiculed and subsequently replaced by political democracy. Man has been given a *free* reign to rely upon his reason and critical spirit to design his cultural, moral and material life. Rationalism, science and technology became the new cultural *symbols* of a dominant culture in the Western world.⁶⁹ The profound Kantian synthesis of empirico-rationalism in his ‘Copernican Revolution’ provided new epistemological grounds for a modern Western *weltanschauung* replacing and substituting the traditional Christian theology and Church as interpretative source and a foundation for a radical democratization and industrialization of ‘medieval’ religious Western culture. Modern culture then crystallized from the critical interpretations of Kantian ‘*Kritik*’ that viewed modernization as a movement of knowledge and freedom from self-imposed tutelage of man over man. In this way, Western man found a new purpose to advance historically and culturally in a universal march. This led him to ‘colonize’ and ‘civilize’ the entire humanity with his newfound destiny of liberation, freedom and democracy, and especially his immediate neighbors, the Islamic East.

At the time when Western world was undergoing through a new cultural experience of Enlightenment, industrial revolution, political democracy, civil liberty and *laissez faire* economy, all indicators of the birth pangs of a new civil society in the West; its counterpart in the East, the Islamic societies were also undergoing cultural changes of their own *type*. These changes were mainly *religious* in essence and outlook,⁷⁰ and all of which claimed to reinvigorate a disintegrating, dividing Islamic culture in the East. All the leading Ulemas of this new cultural *movement* in the Islamic East perceived the onslaught of new and *dynamically* emerging Western societies with their newfound desire to

⁶⁹ See for example, Phil Bagby's (1958), *Culture and History: Prolegomena to the Comparative Study of Civilizations*, London, Longman, pp-124. He observes, “The rise of the bourgeoisies, the development of nationalism, the decline of religion and family, the growth of science and individualism, all these are changes—and perhaps interrelated changes—in the various branches of Western European culture in relatively modern times.”

⁷⁰ Qureshi, I. H (1992), *A Short History of Pakistan (Vol.1-4)*, pp-622-623 Karachi, Bureau of Composition, Compilation and Translation, University of Karachi.

direct and re-mould the course of world-history. In Indian sub-continent, Shah Waliullah of Delhi led the change of this *religious* reinvigoration⁷¹ of a socially degenerate Islamic India. In Arabia it was Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab,⁷² in North Africa it was Muhammad bin Ali Alsunassi Altunnisi, a Sufi-Alim, who inspired and guided the cultural movements of religious revnewal.⁷³ In the Ottoman Empire, it was the ottoman bourgeoisie who embarked on a process of change in the prevalent cultural state of affairs.⁷⁴ However, the impact of modern Western worldview was already well-advanced in the Islamic world through ‘colonization’ and consequent ‘modernization’ of these cultures by their new political masters when these Ulema undertook efforts of reinvigoration. Western ‘enlightenment’ and its incumbent political-cultural system was thus exported to Islamic India and elsewhere, through rapid ‘colonization’ of Islamic east; and in turn India, Arabia, Egypt, and North Africa, were exposed to a new and second biggest intellectual-cultural challenge to these societies.⁷⁵ This new cultural challenge, subsequently changed the social-cultural structure of these societies very profoundly. For example, in Islamic South Asia, there were two different responses to the colonization and westernization; one was radical and militant response of *traditional* Ulemas and the second was a liberal, moderate response of such ‘modern’ Muslims like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Syed Amir Ali. The response of these ‘modern’ Muslims became the dominant cultural paradigm of Islamic South Asia. Their intellectual response also provided new philosophical and moral legitimation for establishing a closer cultural linkage with the Western cultures and their ‘modernization’ projects.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Iqbal, M. (1982) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought inIslam*, Sh.Muhammad Ashraf& Sons, Lahore.

⁷² Ibid,pp-153

⁷³ .Ibid,pp-153

⁷⁴ Fatma, M.G. (1996), *Rise of Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*. Oxford University Press, N.Y,pp-37-39.

⁷⁵ Crusades being the first major Western political and military challenge during 12th century A.D.

⁷⁶ Saeed, J. (1994), *Islam and Modernization: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut. Pp- 80-90.

Eventually, this led to the radical transformation in the *traditional* Islamic culture in South Asia, which was until that time (mid-19th century) mainly a repository of a medieval-agrarian society and thus a social representation of moral, political, technical resources and values rooted and legitimized by an agricultural society...

The modern cultural contact with the Western political, social, moral, scientific and technological ideas initiated a 'wave' of reinterpretation and rethinking in the Islamic culture in South Asia and its future historical role and destiny vis-à-vis the emerging dominant Western world-culture. The cultural legitimization of 'modernity' by Muslim thinkers such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his colleagues at Aligarh Muslim University, India, led to a fresh wave of cultural *reorientation* of the Islamic society in South Asia in particular and the other parts of the Islamic world in general. The realist thesis of 'modern' Muslims, who never compromised on the 'core' notions of their Islamic culture which was its *religious* essence, led to the birth of such revolutionary thinkers and leaders as Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Inayatullah Khan Al-Mashriqui, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Muahmmad Ali Johar, Mualana Zafar Ali and Chuadary Rehmat Ali. They created a new politico-cultural consciousness amongst the Muslim masses of Islamic South Asia. This eventually made possible the genesis of a modern Muslim *identity* in the form of a new Muslim State, namely Pakistan. Each one of them put forward a 'modern' discourse on the philosophical, moral, social, cultural, and historical criticism of the 'great horizon' of the cultural past in Islamic South Asia. They also put forward a modern strategy to advance the course of Islam in a completely industrialized and technologically forward-looking world.⁷⁷

All these intellectuals and leaders thus formulated, or helped in formulating a *contemporary* world-view of Islamic South Asia, which is liberal, modern, technological, affirmative, democratic and socially just without compromising on the foundational principles of Islam on all matters and core *religious* structures of Islamic social organization. Thus providing the contemporary Muslims to cope well with the demands of the modern world, without letting the 'spirit' of Muslim culture becoming hostage to the designs

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp-74-75.

of any autocratic, dictatorial or reactionary cultural force in their society, in the name of Islam or religion.⁷⁸

Following in the footsteps of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Iqbal and Jinnah, intellectuals like Akbar S. Ahmad and Ziauddin Sardar in U.K and Ismail Al-Faruqi, in USA and Fetullah Gulen in Turkey have continued their studies in furthering the understanding of Islamic culture for the Western world. Not only the project of ‘islamization’⁷⁹ of secular sciences of the West and its liberal-democratic values but also a continuous ‘dialogue’⁸⁰ and diffusionistic exchanges of Western and Islamic cultures have been proposed by these writers. Their common theme is the preservation of Muslim identity in the wake of modern, ‘mediaized’ and ‘globalized,’ Western cultural-environments.⁸¹

Contrary to Fukuyama’s ‘End of History’ thesis and Samuel Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilization’ theory, these Muslim thinkers keep on promoting a ‘*humanistic*’ image of Islamic culture and the mutually beneficial historical relationships which both Western world and the Islamic East can enjoy. The prototypical trumpeting of ‘clash’ of Islamic and Western civilizations would not make the globalization secure and the world a politically safe place to live both in the Islamic East and the Secular West.

Human societies have reached to a new epoch of historical-political maturation of a global culture, which may be based upon the technological *exterior* of the Western world and the spiritual *interior* of the Islamic East. This would be a ground unification of the two divergent cultural paradigms into a single fold of a true and authentic *humanistic* culture, ushering well into the

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp-75-76.

⁷⁹ Faruqi, Ismail (2008) Islam: Movement for World Order. Available at <http://iiit.org/Portals/0/faruqi/Islam-movementforworldorder.pdf> (Accessed on 07/02/08).

⁸⁰ Carroll, B.J. (2007). A Dialogue of Civilizations: Gulen's Islamic Ideals and Humanistic Discourse. The Light, Inc.

⁸¹ Mona,AbulFadl (2008) She writes, “ Any attempt therefore to influence the course of civilization must rely on the modes of interaction that occur between a dominant West and the emerging power centers all over the globe. In essence, these modes need to be seen as a function of culture and not merely as politics”. Available at; http://www.muslimwomenstudies.com/cultural_imperative.htm. (Accessed on 07/25/08)

next millennium free of genocide, ethnic cleansing, religious persecutions and social-economic injustices.⁸²

⁸² Iqbal, M (1982), in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, particularly speaks about working towards ‘mutual harmonies’ between science and religion thus providing a programme for convergent intellectual discourse between Islamic East and Secular West. See Preface.