

Chapter 29 - Obsolescence of the Art of Daydreaming

One of the most tragic characters of twentieth century fiction is that of Rubashov in Arthur Koestler's disturbing novel "Darkness At Noon" (Koestler, 1984). Rubashov is a revolutionary who believes deeply in the Bolshevik project of bringing about a society free of exploitation to the extent that he not only supports the adoption of dubious means for achieving this end but also does in some of his close friends in the years after the revolution is successfully brought about before he is finally arrested himself and after a long interrogation executed. During the long incarceration before his execution he has a chance to reflect on his life. He remembers fondly his youth on his father's estate when he used to lie on the lawns and dream of bringing about a revolution followed by the establishing of an egalitarian socio-economic order. I read this novel in 1982 at a time when I was trying to find my future path and it was this romantic dreaming of the young Rubashov that impressed me most. I too began dreaming of doing something to improve matters for the poor and down trodden and eventually found my way to Jhabua.

Indeed in the modern era right from the sixteenth century political thinkers and activists have dreamt of establishing ideal societies. All the main political philosophies of our time - Liberalism, Marxism and Anarchism, of which last Gandhism is an Indian variant, were more or less well developed by the early years of the twentieth century and had the whole of that century to work themselves out in. In their ideal forms all these philosophies claim to be able to free humanity from the tyranny arising from the arbitrary use of power in centralised societies resulting essentially out of inequality of all kinds and most importantly of the economic kind. They have all, however, to a lesser or greater extent been blind to the exploitation and oppression of women by men leading the former to develop their own liberating philosophy of feminism. This promise of salvation from the purgatory of poverty and powerlessness for the vast majority has inspired generations of political activists to dream. However, like Rubashov, dreamers of all political hues, ending as we have seen with the activists of the mass environmental movements that began in India in the late nineteen seventies, have found the stark socio-economic reality to be extremely stubborn and not amenable to moulding in accordance with their dreams. Consequently one can't help wondering at the beginning of a new millennium whether the art of daydreaming hasn't finally become obsolete.

This tendency to daydream on the part of philosophers and political radicals is nothing but a subtler manifestation of the animism that has been a part of the human psyche for millions of years ever since language developed to the extent where human beings began to ponder on their separateness from the rest of nature and could not face up to the awesome thought that they and they alone were responsible for their destiny. In primitive times the inanimate winds, mountains, rivers and seas were all imbued with anthropomorphic spirits and colourful myths were created about their supernatural powers that controlled the destiny of the universe and so of human beings. Zeus in Greek and Rama in Hindu mythology are prime examples. This myth making has been the dominant trend in religion, art and literature through the ages and also in a more subtle form in philosophy and science where it is termed as teleology or the study of purpose or intelligent design in nature and human beings. But there has also been a philosophical counter current of myth breaking, which has held the key to human freedom over the millennia termed as naturalism, which denies the existence of Gods or any overarching purpose or design in nature. A brief tour of the history of the fascinating struggle that has waged through the ages between the mythmakers and myth

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breakers will help us in deciding whether the time hasn't come for the latter to take centre stage as far as radical socio-political activism is concerned.

Complications in history forcing human beings to abandon an anarchistic "state of nature" existence and begin travelling on the path of social development arose with the idea of property first communitarian and then private making an entry into the human realm. This for the first time pitted groups of humans against each other and led to murderous combats and even genocides. Later with the development of private property this conflict spread to individuals. Thus the institution of the state developed for groups to carry out military campaigns against each other and to arbitrate the conflicts arising out of property disputes between individuals within the group. The gradual marginalisation of women to being only child bearers and carers, which had begun earlier, increased with the need for specialised fighting skills to protect property. Later the need to ensure inheritance of property resulted in the institution of marriage both for the control of the sexuality of women to determine the parentage of children and their restriction within the home to take care of them till they became adults. This in turn gave rise to the institution of patriarchy, which formalised the domination and exploitation of women by men (Lerner, 1986). The Gods were then brought in to provide divine sanction to the new repressive institutions of the state, marriage and patriarchy and organised religion made its debut along with its priests.

The initial radical reactions to this false legitimisation through organised religion of the holding of property and the consequent bloodletting were from within the animist tradition and were included in the religious texts as an idealistic alternative - "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Bible, Old Testament, Isaiah ii). Later still this idealism manifested itself in mystic spiritualism as in that of the Vedas (Sharma, 2000) and in idealistic philosophy as in that of Plato (Cooper & Hutchinson, 1997) in all of which the paramount nature of a supreme spirit or ideal, which directs the destiny of the world is acknowledged. Confucius in China too was part of this tradition advocating unselfishness, non-accumulation of property and compassion towards others while acknowledging the supremacy of God. However, these radical ideas, basically centred on reining in one's desires, were no match for the grosser idea of capricious Gods who were as greedy as human beings were and who could be supplicated for help in the fulfilment of this greed. Not surprisingly murder and mayhem in pursuit of property accumulation has continued in the name of religion with spiritualism and idealism having taken a back seat as far as influence over the average human mind is concerned.

There were other thinkers, however, who, about half a millennium before Christ, broke with the animist tradition, refused to accept the existence or direction of Gods and plumped for naturalism instead. Socrates was the first such person in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition (Taylor, 1999). He developed the dialectical question and answer method of enquiry through dialogues between a student and himself wherein all received wisdom was to be subjected to analysis as to whether it accorded with reality or not. He is reputed to have said - "One thing only I know and that is that I know nothing"! He had to die because he angered the elders by drawing the youth away from the temples with his agnosticism. Plato even though he was a student of Socrates and wrote down the dialogues later for posterity did not continue this wise critical tradition and instead plumped for "forms" that would provide ideal examples for human behaviour and conceived of an idealistic Republic where there would be no faults whatsoever. Plato in fact surreptitiously put down his own animistic ideas as being those of Socrates in the later dialogues giving rise to what is

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known as the "Socratic problem" of discrepancy between what was originally said by Socrates and something diametrically opposite that was later attributed to him by Plato. However, another student of Socrates, Antisthenes, who was not a voting citizen of Athens because he was either the son of a slave or a prostitute, not only carried forward this critical tradition but considerably enhanced it and handed it down to Diogenes of Sinope who gave it a definitive philosophical form (Branham & Goulet-Cazé eds, 1996).

Diogenes not only inveighed against Gods and received wisdom but also more importantly stressed that human beings should lead a life of hard labour in harmony with nature and not accumulate property. Thus Diogenes used to scrounge around, beg and because private property had no sanctity for him, even steal to get food and shout out at the better-heeled citizens of Athens for living in luxury. His aversion to anything private extended even to his body and so he would bathe and masturbate in public! He used to publicly say that the priests in the temple of Olympia were the "big thieves" and the rulers and the philosophers who went there to ask them to supplicate the Gods on their behalf were the "little thieves". This behaviour of his led the people of Athens to call him a "kunikos" or dog and this is how his philosophical tradition has come to be called "Cynicism". Diogenes went an important step further than Socrates in denying the paramount power of the state. Socrates had believed that while everything else could be questioned the power of the state to make laws and dispense justice could not and so despite offers by his acolytes to arrange for his escape from Athens after the death sentence was pronounced on him he refused and bore a slow death through drinking the poison hemlock instead. But Diogenes not only refused to acknowledge the power of the state he also berated people for owing allegiance to some state or other. He declared that he was a free citizen of the Cosmos meaning the whole of nature and the whole of the human race. So Diogenes can be said to be the first conscious atheistic environmental anarchist.

There are a whole host of colourful stories woven around this iconoclastic philosopher (Hicks, 1979). On one occasion Diogenes was washing lettuce to prepare a meal when Plato came along and told him that if he had paid court to the ruler Dionysius he would not have had to wash lettuces. To this Diogenes replied that if Plato had washed lettuces then he would not have had to pay court to the ruler! On another occasion Alexander the Great came and stood next to where he was sun bathing in the street and said to him, "I am Alexander the Great ask any boon of me". Diogenes is reported to have said "I am Diogenes the Dog please get out of my sunlight". He once went round the streets with a lighted lantern in broad daylight and when people asked him why he was doing this he replied that he was searching for one true human being. Two millennia later another atheist the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche alluded to this story and slightly modified it to have a mad man enter a market with a lighted lamp searching for God and then announce that God was dead (Nietzsche, 1974). Needless to say such a physically and intellectually tough lifestyle and worldview did not find many takers among the people in general. However, there were some philosopher followers of Diogenes for a few centuries after him, including possibly the only woman philosopher of ancient times, Hipparchia, who in typical cynical fashion consummated her marriage to the fellow cynic Crates in public.

The Stoic philosophers coming after them drew some inspiration from the Cynics about the hard life that should be lived. But they put God back in the centre of things and so with time this atheistic and anarchistic school of thought gradually fell into oblivion. There was another distinct naturalistic trend in Greek philosophy beginning with Heraclitus which matured with the philosophy of Epicureanism which while not denying the existence of Gods

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posited that they had nothing to do with the workings of nature and human beings which depended on the motion and interaction of atoms that make up the material world. This philosophy that battled the idealism of the Stoics insisted that the soul too was made up of atoms, which dissociated at the time of death, so there was no question of after life and people should live their lives without the fear of retribution in the hereafter. Like the Cynics the original Epicureans advocated a life of abstinence in close concordance with nature (Hicks, op cit). This radical philosophy, which is mostly known through the later work of the Roman poet Lucretius was ridiculed by the Church and trivialised falsely for obvious reasons into the popular dictum of "eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" which is the hedonistic connotation that the common meaning of Epicureanism still has. This philosophy too became dormant till it was revived again when modern scientists drew inspiration from it in their battle against the Church many centuries later.

The Charvaks, a long line of anonymous materialistic philosophers, mounted the challenge to animism in India from the time of the Vedas. They denied the existence of God and the doctrine of rebirth and after life and like the Epicureans insisted that instead of wasting time in prayers people should busy themselves with living simply in harmony with nature. They were persecuted by the Brahminical orthodoxy and their philosophy too was distorted and trivialised into the popular dictum of "rhinang krityam ghritam pibet" - borrow and drink clarified butter (Sharma, op cit). They could not make much of an impact and gradually faded away. A much more significant challenge to animism and Brahminism was launched later by the Buddha about a century before Socrates. He said that all the miseries of humans arose from their desires. The desires of innumerable people from time immemorial had given rise to an intricate web of cause and effect creating the world as people saw it. There is no God who controls the destiny of human beings and instead they should rein in their desires and live a life of moderation if they want to end their sufferings (Kalupahana, 1992).

Thus Buddha like Diogenes and Epicurus places squarely on the individual the onus for his destiny. Unlike Diogenes and Epicurus, however, the Buddha was a mystic. He did not believe in the existence of a supreme spirit but he believed that the only way to know the absolute truth and so be completely liberated from desires and achieve a state of "Nirvana" was through inward meditation on nothingness. While he went around propagating his path of atheistic moderation among the common people against the prevailing Brahminical orthodoxy he also built up a democratic order of "Bhikkhus" or meditative mendicants who would give up all their desires in the search for absolute truth. So democratic was the Buddha that even though initially he was averse to having women as Bhikkhunis in his order because of the problems it might cause for the practice of celibacy he bowed to the pressure of his fellow male Bhikkhus and allowed them in too. His criterion for acceptance of true knowledge remains unsurpassed even today - "Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' When you yourselves know, 'These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them (Thera, 1987)

Another great naturalist who was a contemporary of the Buddha was the Chinese Lao Tzu who came up with the idea that the basic natural principle of Tao should be allowed to operate freely without the imposition of human desires on it. He averred that it was because

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human beings obstructed the natural processes with their desires that they suffered so much misery and he wrote this all down in a long poem called the Tao Te Ching (Lao Tsu, 1997). I love one particularly cogent anarchistic excerpt from this poem immensely -

Why are people starving?
Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes.
Therefore the people are starving.
Why are the people rebellious?
Because the rulers interfere too much.
Therefore they are rebellious.
Why do people think so little of death?
Because the rulers demand too much of life.
Therefore the people take life lightly.

Like the Buddha, Lao Tzu was a mystic and his Tao is a mystic principle. So Taoism did not find many takers among the generally animistic populace of China of that time and remained an obscure mystical cult instead of evolving into a mass political movement.

After the Buddha's death atheism slowly receded among his followers and mysticism took an upper hand with the Buddha himself being converted into a God. All kinds of myths were built up around him and Buddhism became a religion. This animistic inversion not only resulted in Buddhism losing its radical and atheistic anti-Brahminical character but also some of its mysticism degenerated into the prevailing Indian black art of "Tantrism" which involves playing around with soul transference between persons, animals and even dead bodies. There is a lovely story in this regard about a prince who along with his friend learned the practice of soul transference and was later tricked by the friend into being trapped in the body of a cuckoo, while the friend entered the prince's body and usurped his place. The cuckoo-prince like a true Buddhist accepts his new situation as an opportunity to benefit others and finding himself able to communicate not only with human beings but also with the birds and animals he lives among, he remains in the forest to teach them the Buddha's path of liberation (Lo Dro, 1982).

Liberation, in reality, was at a discount as both the idealistic animism and the atheistic naturalism of ancient times were buried under the grosser forms of organised religion throughout the world which tended to support the greed of human beings and the oppressive state structure developed to protect the property accumulated as a consequence of this greed. In Europe the teaching of Jesus Christ which was unabashedly against the accumulation of property and for compassion towards fellow human beings was itself subverted once the institutionalised Church set up in his name became the official religion of the rulers. Radical thinking was ruthlessly suppressed to prevent any possibility of revolt against the prevailing order. Even in the heyday of the Greek philosophers and the Buddha, society was based on slavery with democracy being limited to an aristocratic few and women firmly confined to the home. Xanthippe the wife of Socrates had to bear all the troubles of bringing up their children and she never failed to berate him for being a good for nothing idler who brought more notoriety to his family than bread! (Durant, 1967) The eclipse of idealism and rationalism and the increasing superstitious dogmatism of the Church in the Christian era strengthened patriarchal structures and pushed women further and further inside the home dehumanising most of them into being just child bearing and rearing machines.

Religious fanaticism in fact has proved to be a convenient cover for disputes over property and power and been a major cause of murderous conflicts between communities throughout history down to the present day. The suppression of rational thinking combined

with greed automatically leads to the blind acceptance of religious canons by the majority of people. This blind allegiance is then used to flame the passions of the followers of a particular religion around supposed violation of their canons or places of worship and provoke them to attack the followers of another religion. Often these murderous conflicts have taken place between two sects of the same religion. The worst instance of course is that of the Medieval Crusades which were spurred by the Roman Catholic Church with the intention of establishing its supremacy over the lay kings of Europe, a victory in its feud with the Eastern Orthodox Church and victory over the Muslims which not only led to massacres of Christians, Jews and Muslims then but provoked deepseated enmities and cultural biases that vitiate the middle east to this day (Armstrong, 2001). We in India have suffered and continue to suffer murder and mayhem arising from religious bigotry.

Another major casualty of religious obscurantism was science. Science based on rational interpretation of observed reality had made good progress in the time of the Greeks. Aristotle, the philosopher of philosophers, even though he too believed in a God as the initial cause of the universe, nevertheless put Greek science which had proceeded in an ad hoc manner before him on a firm basis by systematising the scientific method of experimentation and logical interpretation for getting at the truth (McKeon, 2001). However, later the theistic aspects of his philosophy which went counter to his scientific thoughts were showcased by the Church and so science took a backseat. The extent of the brake that the belief in God put on scientific inquiry can be gauged from the fact that the Greek mathematician and astronomer Aristarchus had postulated from a study of the movement of the stars and the moon that the earth moved round the sun and not vice versa in the third century BCE (Crowe, 1990) but this was discarded by his contemporaries because of the Platonic belief supported later by Aristotle that the earth, where the Gods were housed, had to be fixed at the centre of the universe. Some people tried later to follow up this literally earth moving postulate but were suppressed by the Church till almost two millennia later Copernicus, despite being a cleric of the Church, once again revived it and kicked off the modern scientific revolution with his mathematical proof of it.

Thereafter science progressed inexorably, if hesitantly at first, as its practitioners began conducting experiments and deducing inferences from them that clearly contradicted the theistic views of the Church. The Italian scientist Galileo was hauled up by the Church for supporting the helio centric theory of Copernicus and forced to retract at the peril of death. This considerably unnerved his French contemporary Descartes who suppressed the publication of his own treatise on the same subject and went about writing more cautiously about the sources of knowledge instead (Cottingham, 1992). Descartes provided what has come to be called the Cartesian Framework of modern philosophical and scientific thinking by stressing that everything in the universe could be doubted until proved to be true through observation and analysis. The first truth thus arrived at by him was the fact that he himself existed because he doubted - cogito ergo sum. Thereafter by logical analysis of the external world perceived through the senses all other truths could be determined. This duality between the observer and the observed and the observation and analysis by the former of the latter is the basis for knowing all objective truth to this day.

This posed the crucial problem for Descartes of proving the existence of God as otherwise he would be going against the Church and risking its wrath. To get round this he advanced the argument that he is able to perceive "clear and evident truths" because God exists, who being a perfect being would not deceive him and who had also given him the capacity to discern the true from the untrue. But this then created the problem that in order to

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argue that the existence of God is also a clear and evident truth, Descartes requires God to exist beforehand in order to guarantee the certainty of what to him is a clear and evident truth. In other words Descartes assumes a priori the existence of God without any proof so as to be able to say later through a logical sleight of hand that God exists. So Descartes failed to provide any independent objective proof of the existence of God. This logical fallacy is known as the Cartesian Circle for the circularity of argument involved in assuming beforehand what is to be proved and it arose because of Descartes' attempt to do the impossible - objectively prove the existence of God!

Descartes thus stood at the critical juncture in human development when the battle between naturalism and animism was to commence anew from where it had been suppressed two millennia earlier. The English philosopher Thomas More who had published *Utopia*, which was a rehash of Plato's idealistic Republic and had God firmly at its centre, had just preceded him (More, 2003) while the equally English empirical materialism of Hobbes and Locke immediately followed finding literary expression a little later in the brilliant socio-political satire of the towering French rationalist Voltaire who dominated the intellectual firmament throughout the entire eighteenth century. Early on in adult life, the irreverent Voltaire fell foul of the Regent of France and it is reported that the former said to him, "I will wager that I can show you something that you have never seen before". When Voltaire asked what it was the Regent replied "The inside of the Bastille!" (Durant, op cit). Thus began a long career of incarcerations and exile, which only sharpened Voltaire's opposition to intellectual and material tyranny. In his novelette *L'Ingenu* an American Indian comes back to France with some explorers and has to be converted to Christianity. He is given a copy of the New Testament and after reading it he says that he must first be circumcised as he did not find in this scripture a single person who was not circumcised and so he must make this sacrifice to Hebrew custom! Then when he is confessed by a priest he drags him down and sits on the seat himself asking the priest to confess in turn because the relevant dictate in the New Testament is "Confess your fault one to another" (Bible, New Testament, James 5:16). The Indian says to the priest "Come, my friend, I have related my sins to you and you shall not stir till you recount yours"!

Descartes came in a long line of people who had tried to objectively prove the existence of God and he was not the last. The stark knowledge that there is no God driving the world with a central purpose and that human beings are indeed the masters of their own destiny was too scary a thought for even the leading practitioners of science. The German philosopher and mathematician Leibniz came to the optimistic conclusion that God was basically benevolent and that human beings were living in the best of all possible worlds despite its many evils. A school of thought that has come to be called theodicy after the essay in which Leibniz coined this term (Leibniz, 1989). On November 1st 1755 a devastating earthquake struck in Portugal. It being All Saints Day the Churches in Lisbon were packed with worshippers and the Devil finding his victims in close formation reaped a rich harvest as sixty thousand people were killed. The French clergy then explained this disaster as a punishment from God for the sins of the people of Lisbon. This angered Voltaire and in a passionate poem he asserted that either God despite being able to prevent evil had not done so in which case he was equivalent to the devil or despite wishing to prevent evil he could not do so in which case he was no God at all. Rousseau the other great French rationalist of the eighteenth century, who was like Descartes and Leibniz loathe to let go of his comforting belief in God, responded to this poem by saying that humans were to be blamed for the disaster and not God because if they had stayed in villages and not in towns and in the fields under the sky and not in houses then this tragedy would not have occurred! (Durant, op cit)

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This prompted Voltaire to write the short novel *Candide*, arguably the best satire of all time, in which he tears to shreds Leibniz's optimistic theodicy, parodying him in the character of the innocent *Candide*'s teacher Pangloss, with a riotously comic pen - "Pangloss was professor of metaphysicotheologicocosmonigology....'it is demonstrable' said he, 'that all is necessarily for the best end. Observe that the nose has been formed to bear spectacles.... legs were visibly designed for stockings.... stones were designed to construct castles.... pigs were made so that we might have pork all the year round. Consequently they who assert that all is well have said a foolish thing; they should have said all is for the best'!(Voltaire, 1950) Voltaire not only battled throughout his life against the animism of the Church but he was also a feisty votary of the freedom of speech and expression, which is the most basic requirement of democratic governance, as encapsulated in his pithy saying "I do not agree with a word you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it". Finally across the English Channel it was the Scottish philosopher David Hume, nicknamed the "Great Infidel" for his atheistic views, who drove the last nail into the old God centred animism of the Church by declaring that the only knowledge that was true was that inferred from empirical experience through a process of reasoning free from Cartesian circularity (Graham, 2005).

However, Rousseau, by introducing the concept of the General Will in political philosophy, started a new and subtler kind of animism replacing God with a deterministic intelligent design that directed the destinies of men. He argued that all the problems of governance would be solved if the people entered into a Social Contract to reduce the physical freedom that they would have enjoyed in a state of nature without any social formation in exchange for the advantages of living in a society and cooperating with each other. This society would then have a General Will that would function for the good of society rather than only for that of the individual and so overcome the individual recalcitrants who might want to upset the system (Gourevitch, 1997). At about the same time Adam Smith as we have seen introduced the similar concept of the invisible hand in economics and the German philosopher Kant the concept of an absolute and supreme inner moral law that operated for the ultimate good of humanity. This trend continued with Hegel's Absolute Idea and the progress of humanity through a dialectical process of negation and synthesis towards perfection, Marx's conception of the inevitability of the movement of history through a similar dialectical process in the material world to a communist society free of exploitation and finally the currently widely held belief that science and technology can by themselves through the discovery of natural laws based on empirical observation solve the problems arising out of the cupidity of human beings. There is a circularity of reasoning involved in all these propositions because they assume a priori without any objective proof the existence of a deterministic law or principle that then ensures through logical sleight of hand the inevitability of utopian end results ignoring the grim fact that human beings are in reality greedy people who throughout history haven't stopped at murder to further their own ends.

The English philosopher Bernard Mandeville, another great naturalist of the prolific eighteenth century, parodied this logical fallacy in a hilarious satirical poem and commentary called the "Fable of the Bees" which deserves quoting at length (Mandeville, 1997) -

..... As Sharpers, Parasites, Pimps, Players,
Pick-Pockets, Coiners, Quacks, Sooth-Sayers, [50]
And all those, that, in Enmity
With down-right Working, cunningly
Convert to their own Use the Labour
Of their good-natur'd heedless Neighbour:
These were called Knaves; but, bar the Name, [55]

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The grave Industrious were the Same.
All Trades and Places knew some Cheat,
No Calling was without Deceit.
..... Thus every Part was full of Vice, [155]
Yet the whole Mass a Paradise;
..... Such were the Blessings of that State;
Their Crimes conspired to make 'em Great;
And Vertue, who from Politicks
Had learn'd a Thousand cunning Tricks,
Was, by their happy Influence, [165]
Made Friends with Vice: And ever since
The worst of all the Multitude
Did something for the common Good.....
.....Then leave Complaints: Fools only strive
To make a Great, an honest Hive. [410]
T'enjoy the World's Conveniencies,
Be famed in War, yet live in Ease
Without great Vices, is a vain
Eutopia seated in the Brain.
Fraud, Luxury, and Pride must live; [415]
And We the Benefits receive.

Mandeville begins his lengthy commentary to the poem by saying - "One of the greatest reasons why so few people understand themselves is that most writers are always teaching men what they should be, and hardly ever trouble their heads with telling them what they really are. As for my part, without any compliment to the courteous reader, or myself, I believe man (besides skin, flesh, bones, etc., that are obvious to the eye) to be a compound of various passions, that all of them as they are provoked and come uppermost, govern him by turns, whether he will or no. To show that these qualifications, which we all pretend to be ashamed of, are the great support of a flourishing society has been the subject of the foregoing poem." Not surprisingly the clergy called him the "Man- Devil"!

Thus a new set of comforting myths have developed from the subtler animistic propositions mentioned above - the liberal one that the centralised liberal democratic state and parliamentary democracy constitute the best form of government or the Marxist one that such a state is in reality the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, which will unerringly be overthrown by a revolution and be replaced with a state that is a dictatorship of the proletariat which in turn will eventually wither away with the formation of a communist society, the universal modernist one that centralised industrial development is the only path of economic progress for human beings and the capitalist one that the market is the best and most efficient institution for the allocation of resources and incomes. These myths try to either complement or replace the original myth of Gods running this world and being amenable to supplication to improve the fate of human beings, which holds sway over the minds and hearts of a large majority of people even today. Indeed as we have seen in India the metaphors from this original religious myth have been used to justify the injustices meted out in the name of bringing about modern development. Thus some myth or other or a combination of myths directs the affairs of human beings because the efforts made over thousands of years within both the animist and naturalist traditions to rein in desires, greed and the tendency to accumulate property have failed miserably. Today with capitalism in full swing these desires are being fanned more than ever before, as greed is the fundamental basis of capitalism.

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The anarchists have underestimated the tremendous hold that myths of various kinds have on the human mind and so not surprisingly have remained on the fringe of the real political world with their austere anti-statist dictums forever caught up in frustrating Catch 22s of all kinds. Indeed the anarchist postulate of a state less social system is itself a utopian myth. The American philosopher Robert Nozick has shown how, given that conflicts are inevitable over private property which most people want to possess, an invisible hand mechanism will lead to a minimal state system developing from a state of nature in a particular geographical area to ensure that violation of the rights of people do not occur (Nozick, 1974). However, like in all invisible hand models he too assumes that the people will be acting rationally in accordance with a central principle. This is - "from each as they choose and to each as they are chosen". That is that people will contribute to society the products and services they want to and they will be compensated in accordance with what others are prepared to pay for what they have to offer in the market. Since the operation of this principle is dependent on the market, in reality rational choices are prevented from being made because some players distort the functioning of the market in order to further their own greed as we have seen earlier. These players get more and more powerful and so instead of the utopian minimal state of Nozick's theory we have top-heavy states the world over that exploit and oppress a majority of their citizens on behalf of the powerful few. In the case of the USA, the rich Americans' insatiable taste for beefsteaks done rare has not only left the Afro-Americans in the slums of Washington without decent living conditions but has even forced the Bhil adivasis in far away Madhya Pradesh to do without two square meals a day!

Thus while the old myth making around Gods had given rise to the powerful institution of the Church which ruthlessly trampled on individual freedoms so also the new teleological myths have given rise to the institutions of the State which as we have seen are much more powerful in comparison to the individual and civil society. As the French sociologist Foucault has perceptively noted the modern state, regardless of its political ideology, has become a gargantuan power machine that "automatises and disindividualises power. Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up" (Foucault, 1977, p 202). So as we have seen there is not much of a difference between the pre-revolutionary and the post-revolutionary states in Russia and between the colonial and post-colonial states in India as far as suppressing the protests of the masses is concerned. In the present day world there are even more powerful institutions than nation states in the form of the unholy trinity of the IMF, World Bank and WTO and the MNCs, backed by tremendous military power and ideological hegemony, which make the individual and civil society even more power less in comparison. This powerlessness of modern human beings has been vividly and disturbingly portrayed in the tragi-comic allegorical novels and short stories of Franz Kafka who wrote in the crucial first two decades of the twentieth century when anarchist, Marxist and libertarian dreams of liberation were gradually being buried in the quagmire of capitalist greed (Preece, 2002).

So while the Cartesian framework has, through the development of science and technology, given human beings immense treasures and power the Cartesian circle has, through the proliferation of modern teleological myths, ensured that these bounties have been wasted in driving human beings deeper into an irrational morass of myth, militarism, super affluence for some and poverty and oppression for the many. The strong new myth of science being the font of all knowledge in fact rose from the teleological belief that the process of observation and reductionist inference within the Cartesian framework would one day reveal all the eternally valid laws that govern nature. With the dawn of the twentieth century,

Recovering the Lost Tongue - A Manifesto of Anarcho-Environmentalism

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however, this certainty of the Cartesian framework and the Newtonian physics built on it was fundamentally shaken with two major developments. First the positing of the theory of relativity by Albert Einstein resulted in space and time losing their absolute and independent character and becoming dependent on the size and velocity of objects. Matter from which all objects were formed was not indestructible but was an intensification of force fields in this relativistic space-time that could be expressed as energy also (Einstein, 1988). As if this was not enough starting with Planck and later with the contributions of Einstein, Bohr, Schroedinger, Pauli and Heisenberg, to name just a few of the scientists involved, a new quantum theory was simultaneously developed which stated that at the subatomic level these force fields exhibited a dual wave and particle nature and their exact character at any point of time could be only given as a probability function (Griffiths, 1995). These discoveries made it clear that human observation within the Cartesian framework could only make a very poor approximation of reality. Natural processes were based totally on chance without being guided by any all-encompassing deterministic law.

Charles Darwin struck the first blow against animism in biology in the second half of the nineteenth century with his theory that the evolution of species took place by a combination of chance and the pressures created by the natural environment and hinted that men too had evolved in this way (Desmond & Moore, 1994). Later advances in molecular biology in the twentieth century have shown that the actual probability of life and later human beings coming into existence was nil as was the probability of all later evolution and so it is just by chance that these have occurred and that the future too is governed solely by chance and that many epoch making changes have followed from events whose prior probability of occurrence was nil (Monod, 1971). Then in the nineteen eighties it became clear through the maturing of the new science of Chaos that the linear determinism of the Newtonian framework did not hold even in the macroscopic world as even a simple system like that of a swinging pendulum in reality exhibited a complex pattern of movement. Even though the system did remain deterministic its actual movements were unpredictable as they varied with even a minute change in the initial conditions. Thus from small random events massive unpredictable phenomena could develop resulting in say the flap of a butterfly's wings in one location causing a storm in another far away location (Gleick, 1988). These discoveries about the supreme randomness and consequent unpredictability of events anywhere in the universe have pulled the rug completely from below the feet of philosophers and political activists prone to daydreaming about utopias evolving in accordance with deterministic laws, firmly underlining the obsolescence of this art.

Yet the disappearance of the neat reductionist logic of determinism and the triumph of randomness as a result of these discoveries was so unpalatable to the human mind accustomed for millions of years to teleological animism that even Einstein was led to say "God does not play dice" (Hooft et al, 2005). Little wonder then that lesser minds have refused to give up their deep seated animism and instead continue to use the powers unleashed by science for the furtherance of their greed and the concomitant murder, mayhem and destruction of nature. The great scientists of the early twentieth century led by Einstein not only did not actively oppose this perennially lethal cocktail of greed and animism but also collaborated with the believers in making the atom bomb piously stating that "We helped in creating this new weapon in order to prevent the enemies of mankind from achieving it ahead of us, which given the mentality of the Nazis, would have meant inconceivable destruction and the enslavement of the rest of the world" (Einstein, 1998, p 115). Nazism and the subsequent World War II as we have seen were direct fallouts of the greedy bickering of the imperialist countries over the control of colonies and crude oil resources. Thus even a person

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of Einstein's intellectual stature could not escape the typical destructive choice that is made by lesser mortals when confronted with a prisoner's dilemma.

The coming to power of the Nazis and a lot of the miseries from which humanity has subsequently suffered and is continuing to suffer could in fact have been averted, as mentioned earlier, if the majority of the German Communist Party had heeded Rosa Luxemburg's advice and not embarked on the foolish adventure of the Spartacist Uprising in 1919 and so escaped from being decimated in toto. Unlike the orthodox Marxists, Luxemburg held the somewhat anarchistic and supremely naturalist view that mass organization should not be a product of an animistic belief in the historical imperative of revolution but rather be a conscious product of the struggles of the working classes - "The modern proletarian class doesn't carry out its struggle according to a plan set out in some book or theory; the modern workers' struggle is a part of history, a part of social progress, and in the middle of history, in the middle of progress, in the middle of the fight, we learn how we must fight... That's exactly what is laudable about it, that's exactly why this colossal piece of culture, within the modern workers' movement, is epoch-defining: that the great masses of the working people first forge from their own consciousness, from their own belief, and even from their own understanding the weapons of their own liberation" (Hudis & Anderson, 2004). Luxemburg was also critical of the Bolsheviks for the way in which they had gone about suppressing the workers soviets and enhanced the bureaucratic powers of the party in the immediate post revolutionary phase. She represented in herself the best that could be culled from the Marxist, anarchist and feminist traditions and her untimely demise was undoubtedly one of the great tragedies of modern history that has been inadequately mourned by a blinkered humanity bent on racing to fill their pockets and killing each other to do so.

The second longest serving myth after that of the existence of God is that men are superior to women. So deep rooted is this myth that even Mary Wollstonecraft who began the modern movement for the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression could not free herself from it entirely and so she considered men to be the ideal toward which women should aspire. Following her women had fought for equality with men but always with an eye to catching up with them. This myth was finally challenged in its entirety by the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in the immediate post World War II era. She argued that women had been historically considered to be deviant and inferior by men and that to break this myth women had to discover their own unique strengths and pursue them instead of imitating men. Women must create their own identity from scratch without reference to men and their oppressive social structures (De Beauvoir, 1993). The great surge of radical feminism in the post World War II era initially drew its inspiration from the ideas of De Beauvoir. Thus the current stress on the importance of women's work and sexuality by feminists and the militant positing of women's separate identities free from oppressive patriarchal structures owes a lot to the path breaking intellectual rebellion of De Beauvoir.

De Beauvoir was part of a tradition of thinking that had from the beginning opposed the absoluteness of the Cartesian framework of observer-observed duality and the objective rationality built up from it. Philosophers in this tradition struggled with the problem of trying to find the meaning of human existence without reference to the outside world. Some like the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard were forced to acknowledge the existence of a God within while others remained steadfastly atheist like the German philosopher Nietzsche and yet others like Kafka and Dostoevsky produced a new literary genre detailing the agony of the effort to impart meaning to a human existence devoid of animistic props. This tradition came to fruition in the bold naturalism of Beauvoir and her partner French philosopher Jean Paul

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Sartre. Sartre averred that human beings existed without any pre-determined purpose and had to define the meaning of their existence and construct their own identity. So human beings are totally free and fully responsible for the choices they make and the values and norms they create (Sartre, 1993). This philosophical peak of naturalism was achieved by Sartre during World War II but subsequently he could not sustain himself there and became associated with Marxism and also a kind of messianic Judaism. This led to his estrangement later from his one time friend, the other great exponent of this tradition, the philosopher Albert Camus.

In the aftermath of World War II, the Holocaust of the Jews and the inhuman excesses of the Stalinist dictatorship in the Soviet Union, Camus pondered over the futility of an "absurd" life that has to be lived under the mindless oppression of mythmakers and their institutions, whether of the state and the church or of the political parties ostensibly fighting for liberation. Camus came to the conclusion that the naturalist myth breaker, whom he called the absurd hero, would have to carry on an endless struggle against the power of the mythmakers in pursuit of human freedom. To this end, as mentioned earlier, he reinterpreted the Hellenic myth of Sisyphus suitably in what is possibly the most eloquent philosophical statement in support of myth breaking ever - "At that subtle moment when man glances backward over this life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling. I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 1955).

As we have seen the destructive mythmaking power of religions, television channels, modern industrial development, nation states, super states and MNCs has increased manifold in comparison to civil society over the past half a century since Camus reinterpreted the Sisyphean myth. So that the role and attitude he prescribed for them has become even more relevant for modern political activists. Naturalistic myth breaking must take precedence in their minds if the human race along with the rest of the earth is to survive. Camus being an anarchist conceived of this struggle only in individual terms. But to be really effective the modern Sisyphus' struggle cannot just be an individual one but must involve the masses in large numbers. This as mentioned earlier is the central problem of anarchism - the near impossibility of organising the masses to fight the tyranny of centralised institutions without setting up massive counter institutions of their own based on some animistic ideology or other. Matters are compounded by the fact that while the naturalist activist may decide to shed all ideologies and stop dreaming of utopias, the masses being mostly animistic and also, a la Mandeville, greedy, would continue to be under the influence of religion or some ideology or other or just politically inert. So the environmental activists must accept that centralised states, super states like the World Bank and the MNCs are here to stay. The only course left for activists is to endlessly roll the stone up the hill organising and strengthening civil society as much as possible to resist the onslaught of these destructive centralising institutions on the rights of citizens and on nature. Thus there was a need in the post World War II era for some other means in which the masses could be mobilised than those being used by leftist and liberal parties. These latter follow their own teleological myths with

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consequent problems for individual freedom. What was needed was a new mode of struggle that could involve the masses without the dangers of centralisation and myth making.

The crucial break came in 1961 as a group of lawyers, journalists, writers and others in London, formed Appeal for Amnesty, 1961 against the sentencing of two Portuguese college students to twenty years in prison for having raised their glasses in a toast to "freedom" in a bar. The appeal was published on May 28th in the London Observer's Sunday Supplement. The appeal related the stories of six "prisoners of conscience" from different countries and of different political and religious backgrounds. They had all been jailed for peacefully expressing their political or religious beliefs and the appeal called on governments everywhere to free such prisoners. It set forth a simple plan of action, calling for strictly impartial, non-partisan appeals to be made on behalf of these prisoners and any who, like them, had been imprisoned for peacefully expressed beliefs (Power, 2001). The response to this appeal was much more enthusiastic than anyone had expected. The one-year appeal grew, was extended beyond the year and Amnesty International and the modern human rights movement were born. No new principles were set forth but the crucial difference from previous anti-statist action was the explicit rejection of political ideology and partisanship and the demand that governments everywhere, regardless of ideology, adhere to certain basic principles of human rights in their treatment of their citizens. This appealed to a large group of people, mostly politically inactive, not interested in joining a political movement, not ideologically motivated and not bothered about the creation of an utopian society but nevertheless concerned about the way in which modern states were encroaching on the rights of individuals. They were simply protesting that any government should abuse, imprison, torture, and often kill human beings whose only crime was in believing differently from their government and saying so in public.

This was followed in the nineteen sixties by Martin Luther King's Civil Rights Movement in the USA and later still by the movement against the Vietnam War in that country. This was also the time when the German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse came out with his first trenchant criticism of modern technological development and the myth of consumerism that it was spawning. Modern states hand in hand with corporate interests were controlling civil society by the creation of false needs to ensure the continuation of capitalist profit making he wrote. Marcuse criticised the straitjacketing of human beings into an artificially created "One Dimensionality" and the destruction of the huge social diversity, which had been an asset of human survival for millennia (Marcuse, 1969). This sparked off the wide spread counter culture protests of the late nineteen sixties with students at the forefront of the battle to break the myth of consumerism and the consequent homogenisation. This rebellion of the youth was echoed in Europe too with the tremendous youth and labour movement in France in 1968, which inspired Sartre also to take to the streets in protest (Cohn-Bendit, 2000). Even though the overwhelming power of the state system and the MNCs weathered all these protests at that time their essence has remained and continues to manifest itself in the ongoing worldwide protests against globalisation (Klein, 2002).

The floodgates of non-party social and political action were thus opened worldwide and in India we had the Sampoorna Kranti Andolan led by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1975. This mode of action has subsequently inspired numerous small groups to organise themselves around various kinds of rights issues and today all over the world there is a vibrant civil society as a result. Even though these small organisations cannot match the power of the states or MNCs they have been able to make their presence felt in many ways. That the grassroots movements in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have survived and are still

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making an impact, however marginal, despite heavy state repression is testimony to this. In every corner of the world there are grassroots protest movements afoot and they have support from various sources. In India there are a thousand mutinies in the form of innumerable small movements under way that are challenging the hegemony of the state and the MNCs. In the world at large too there are such movements afoot working variously towards a more humane and environment friendly socio-economic order that inspires confidence that all is not lost yet (Fernandes, 2006). It is not grand ideologies and elaborate revolutionary programmes that guide these small efforts but the desire to bring about justice through small actions.

These diverse protest movements are not being able to substantially subvert the present world system of destructive development because of the shrewd machinations of the villain of the piece - the World Bank! The World Bank has led the international foundations set up by various MNCs in co-opting grassroots action as mentioned earlier. It has trumpeted the devious and logically circular concept of "social capital" to defuse the radical political challenge that non-party grassroots movements can pose to modern industrial development (Harris, 2001). The concept had originally been mooted by the French left leaning sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to describe the phenomenon of smaller social groupings like the family and kinship relations which help in forming a social class and he argued that the more articulated this is the more are the chances of its being converted into economic and political capital and vice versa in a virtuous circle that has worked well for the upper classes but not for the lower classes because of their initial lack of economic and political capital (Bourdieu, 1993). The use of the term social capital by Bourdieu for what are basically social connections was itself a dilution of the sharply politico-economic meaning of capital but it still retained some of its political flavour. The American political scientist Robert Putnam winked away this crucial two way linkage between politico-economic capital on the one hand and social capital on the other and posited the circular argument that social associations make economic cooperation possible which in turn strengthens social associations conveniently ignoring the fundamental problem of politico-economic power inequalities that prevent economic cooperation in the first place. Thus Putnam suggested that cross class social formations like Sports Clubs and Birdwatchers Associations were ideal means of building up economic and political cooperation between people across classes (Putnam, 1993)! The World Bank has seized on this theory of depoliticised social action and made it the basis of its thrust for apolitical people's participation in development through self help groups, water user associations, forest management committees and what have you (World Bank, 2000). "To attack poverty watch birds" is the new slogan!

What then should the myth breaker do? Who should he turn to for inspiration? At the time when Camus was reinterpreting the myth of Sisyphus, Babaheb Ambedkar was busying himself with reworking the teachings of the Buddha. Ambedkar heeded the advice of the Buddha regarding not blindly trusting received wisdom and instead testing it out in real life. Thus he questioned the mystic aspects of Buddhism and much of the myth surrounding the Buddha and instead opted for an activist and naturalist Buddhism aimed at bringing about social peace rather than only the peace of mind of the individual (Ambedkar, 1977). Consequently for Ambedkar the concept of "Dukha" or sorrow became the exploitation of the poor and Nirvana became not a metaphysical state or attainment, but a real society founded in peace and justice. He had first announced in 1935 that even though he was born one he would not die a Hindu. He realised, however, that the dalits at large would not be able to discard their animism so easily. So he searched around for a religion that was at once naturalistic and also provided a set of beliefs that people could hold on to. His searches led him to Buddhism, which he reinterpreted to the extent that he could compare it favourably with Marxism

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(Ambedkar, 1987). Despite being terminally ill from diabetes he organised in 1956 a massive ceremony in Nagpur in Maharashtra in which he converted some four hundred thousand people to his version of Buddhism (Queen, 1998). Such was the impact of this conversion that Subhadra's parents and many others in Dargahan too converted to this Ambedkarite Buddhism even though they were situated hundreds of kilometers away from Nagpur. Subhadra remembers that there were never any idols or prayers in their house.

Given the likes of the World Bank the task of recovering lost tongues is always fraught with a danger that is quaintly termed by Bengalis as the cool wind from the River Ganges blowing on one's back. Whenever a mass movement reaches its peak there are a lot of people lending their active support to it. However, as state repression gradually intensifies, most of the supporters melt away preferring to watch birds instead. So the cool wind from the Ganges, which earlier had been kept at bay by their once numerous supporters, begins to uncomfortably caress the backs of the activist leaders and deters them from fighting on! That is why the shining example of the practical naturalist Ambedkar should act like a beacon for all those committed to freeing the human race from the destructive myth of modern industrial development. This "Mook Nayak", or heroic leader of the dumb, right up to the day of his death single-mindedly pursued the goal of recovering the lost tongue for the dalits regardless of the support he may be getting. Like for him our battle cry should be "The battle to me is a matter of joy, for ours is not a battle for wealth or power, it is a battle for freedom"(Ambedkar, 2006). Freedom from the age-old tyranny of animistic myths.

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Recovering the Lost Tongue - A Manifesto of Anarcho-Environmentalism

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