

Towards a 'new humanism'?

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Towards a ‘new humanism’? Time and emotion in UNESCO’s science of world-making, 1947-51.

Abstract

This article examines how the newly formed United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) aimed to construct a programme of social science research that would dispense with determinist theories of racial evolution and promote a new humanism for a post-war world. As scholars and politicians debated the shape of a new world order, they turned towards apparently universal categories of time and emotion to explain both individual behaviours and collective cultures. However, the only time that counted was developmental and the only emotions that mattered were those that could be managed and utilised. This article shows how UNESCO's search for a new humanism remained constrained by racialized discourses that closed down the emancipatory potential of reckoning with the past in the present. The possibilities for open futures, generated by anti-colonial politics and by new institutions of knowledge production, would remain marginalised by the teleology that underpinned UNESCO-sponsored social science.

Keywords: India, race, UNESCO, psychoanalysis, time, emotion, development

Introduction

At the moment of India's independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the nation's first prime-minister Jawaharlal Nehru declared that Indian history would begin anew: 'a new star rises, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materialises'.¹ This was a 'turning point' for global history too; the dreams for India, Nehru claimed, 'are also for the world'.² The pioneer pan-Africanist W.E.B Du Bois enthusiastically agreed, naming Indian independence as the greatest date of modern history because it ended the time 'when the white man, by reason of the colour of his skin, can lord it over colored people'.³ Both Nehru and Du Bois pinned their hopes for a new historical epoch, characterised by peace and racial justice, on a radically revised and inclusive humanism. In doing so, they formed one part of a nascent Third World movement of activists, intellectuals and artists, that was committed to ending colonialism and whose deep and diverse roots have only recently been given attention by academic historians.⁴

A characteristic feature of the new humanism championed by post-war intellectuals, activists and artists tried to dispense with racial ideologies and with hierarchies of 'racial types'. Instead, they celebrated a universal humanity and tried to explain human cultural diversity by reference to temporality. Humans were fundamentally the same, all worthy of dignity and all possessing rights, but different because of their diverse histories and cultures.⁵ Yet, if Nehru and Du Bois derived their humanism, and their dreams of the future, from Marxism, a rather

¹ Cited in Pankaj Mishra, *India at 70 and the Passing of Another Illusion*, New York Times, August 11 2017.

² *Ibid.*,

³ *Ibid.*, On the importance of India to Du Bois see Yogita Goyal 'On transnational analogy: Thinking race and caste with W. E. B. Du Bois and Rabindranath Tagore', *Atlantic Studies*, 16, 1 (2019): 54-71

⁴ See, for example, Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) and Su Lin Lewis, and Carolien Stolte. "Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War." *Journal of World History* 30, no. 1 (2019): 1-19.

⁵ We draw here on Dipesh Chakrabarty's argument on rooted humanism 'Humanism in a Global World' in Jörn Rüsen and Henner Laass. *Humanism in Intercultural Perspective: Experiences and Expectations*. (Bielefeld: Transcript - Verlag für Kommunikation, Kultur und soziale Praxis, 2009).

different variant was co-opted into the liberal politics embodied in the founding principles of the United Nations (UN).⁶ For although the new institutions of the UN proclaimed global unity, anti-colonial activists and intellectuals were acutely aware that liberal internationalism could be beholden to racialised conceptions of evolution and empire.⁷ That is why, at the founding conferences of both the UN (San Francisco, 1945) and UNESCO (London, 1945), delegates from Latin America were influential in ensuring the adoption of an expansive definition of human rights and representatives from India insisted that ‘true freedom’ could not flourish alongside colonial exploitation and racial injustice.⁸ Yet, understanding what that freedom looked like and how humans, who were at once both the same and different, could attain it, required more than slogans or declarations. Fleshing out a new politics for a new world order, and trying to move beyond the binaries of racial thought, was a major intellectual and political task in this post-war period of decolonisation.⁹

This article examines the fraught, often hopeful, and sometimes experimental politics of fashioning a new humanism for the future. . The analysis focuses on elite and transnational intellectual discussions, generated by the foundation of UNESCO in 1945, that aimed to construct a vocabulary and a research programme that would dispense with determinist theories of racial evolution and promote a peaceful new world order. In identifying and exploring this particular conjuncture, when the new knowledge institutions and practices of

⁶ For Du Bois’ Marxism, and for the argument that India facilitated Du Bois’ ‘de-essentialization of race’ see Goyal ‘On transnational analogy’, p. 60. See also Bill Mullen, *UnAmerican: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Century of World Revolution* (Temple University Press, 2015). On Nehru and socialism see Taylor C. Sherman (2018) ‘A new type of revolution’: socialist thought in India, 1940s–1960s, *Postcolonial Studies*, 21, 4 (2018): 485-504.

⁷ Glenda Sluga. *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Glenda Sluga ‘UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley’, *Journal of World History*, 21, 3, (2010): 396-97.

⁸ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New Press, 2007): 10-11. Mahendra Kumar, *India and UNESCO* (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs/Sterling Publishers, 1974): 31-32, 39, 53-74.

⁹ Sunil Amrit and Glenda Sluga ‘New histories of the United Nations’ *Journal of World History* 19, 3 (2008) 251-274, 255. On the chronology of this decolonisation see Vineet Thakur, An Asian Drama: The Asian Relations Conference, 1947, *The International History Review*, Advanced online publication, 20 February 2018. DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2018.1434809

UNESCO offered both possibilities and constraints to humanist visions of the world, the article contributes to the intellectual history of international organisations and their ‘world making’ significance.¹⁰ The social scientists brought together under the aegis of UNESCO were part of transnational epistemic networks which, in identifying social and political pathologies and charting courses for their cure, narrated descriptions and crafted stories that were seen to have the potential to change the beliefs and attitudes of others.¹¹ Yet, this was only a potential. The actual outcomes of these world making activities are, as both Glenda Sluga and Poul Duedahl have argued, particularly difficult to assess in international fora where the priorities of individuals, states and organisations were always a matter for negotiation.¹² This analysis focuses, therefore, on two specific fora. In the first forum, scholars contracted to UNESCO, and working out of Paris, debated and designed a research programme to support the ambitious aims of the so-called Tensions Project between 1946 and 1949. The second forum, organised and hosted by the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO in New Delhi in December 1951, invited scholars from around the globe to identify and define the basis of a distinctively ‘East-West’ humanism. In both fora, scholars, who came from different geographical regions and disciplinary locations, engaged in new opportunities for world making, attempting, in distinctive ways conditioned by relationships of power, to widen the intellectual resources that might underpin a new historical epoch. They discussed and debated variants of psychoanalysis and eastern philosophy as they sought to elucidate universal, and post-racial, categories for the study of humans. As they did so, categories of time and emotion became prominent because they appeared central to all human experience and of causal significance for both individual

¹⁰ Duncan Bell, "Making and Taking Worlds " in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (eds.), *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013)

¹¹ Bell, *Making and Taking Worlds*, 262-68.

¹² Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013):16-18; Paoul Duedahl. ‘Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO’ in Paoul Duedahl (ed) *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016): 5-8.

behaviours and whole cultures. These fora can be usefully analysed by drawing on an emerging historiography of time.¹³ As scholars and politicians set down to discuss the shape of the new world order they began to set down competing visions of the future. These visions oscillated between the future as a fundamentally moral category – as a space for political reflection on the world and the agency of humans in it – and the future as a closed category whose shape was a matter of logic, predictive technology and scientific control and management.¹⁴

If time and emotion appeared to offer intellectual resources for a new humanism, both ultimately remained constrained by a western scientism whose racialized temporalities continued to endorse models of individual and national development in which the peoples and nations of Africa and Asia were enjoined to catch up with modernity. Emotions may have been universal but they were not equal. In India, for example, the violence associated with partition was explained in these scholarly circles by the ‘primitive violent aggressive impulses’ that, it was claimed, had been fostered in a colonial, agrarian and caste society, where rigid social order had failed to facilitate either the values or the educational techniques to deal with rapid social change.¹⁵ The more or less explicit message was that India had to modernise. Its peoples, cultures, dismissed by the violent teleology of Western psychology and history, had to become less dependent, more dynamic, more disciplined, and more educated.¹⁶

¹³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Jenny Andersson, *The Future of the World: Futurology, Futurists, and the Struggle for the Post Cold War Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Vanessa Ogle, ‘Time, Temporality and the History of Capitalism’, *Past & Present*, 243, 1 (2019): 312–327.

¹⁴ Andersson, *The Future of the World*, 2-4, 20-26, 224-226.

¹⁵ Jessie Bernard, T.H. Pear, Raymond Aron, Robert C. Angell, *The Nature of Conflict: Studies on the Sociological Aspects of International Tensions* (Paris: UNESCO, 1957): 165-173.

¹⁶ On the violent teleology of Western psychology and history see Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009; 2nd ed) and the useful discussion by Arif Dirlik ‘Ashis Nandy, Reading Ashis Nandy: The Return of the Past; or Modernity with a Vengeance’ in

Such demands help to demonstrate how the knowledge produced by post-war social science, predicated on specific renditions of time and social change and featuring a highly reductive engagement with emotions, constrained the possibilities that new international organisations seemed to offer for imagining alternative, post-racial, societies.¹⁷ UNESCO's new and scientific world humanism, for example, remained grounded in evolutionary theory.¹⁸ Under the leadership of its first Director, the English biologist Julian Huxley, it often espoused eugenic values and the social scientists who participated in its work frequently conceptualised social change and human culture in explicitly evolutionary terms.¹⁹ There were, of course, other ideas and resources available to these social scientists. There was, for example, and as Nico Slate has made clear, an active 'colored cosmopolitanism' that developed from shared histories of oppression and freedom struggles in India and in the United States, and which demanded an 'expansive emancipation' from historical injustices.²⁰ Yet even when scientific, or 'One world' humanism recognised these critiques, it marginalised them.²¹ Instead, human and social scientists at UNESCO continued to employ racialized hierarchical concepts and structures of difference and remained bounded by the 'teleologies of modernity' whose silences and erasures help explain contemporary, but contested, visions of decolonisation.²²

Vinay Lal (ed.) *Dissenting Knowledges, Open Futures: The Multiple Selves and Strange Dislocations of Ashj's Nandy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 13.

¹⁷ Jordanna Bailkin, 'Decolonizing Emotions: The Management of Feeling in the New World Order' in Frank Biess and Daniel M. Gross (eds) *Science and Emotions after 1945: A Transatlantic Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 278-99; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, 'Pasts to be Unveiled: The Interconnections Between the International and the Imperial' in Jerónimo and Monteiro (eds.) *The Pasts of the Present: Internationalism, imperialism and the formation of the contemporary world*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁸ Paul Weindling. 'Julian Huxley and the Continuity of Eugenics in Twentieth-century Britain'. *Journal of Modern European History*. 10: 4 (2012) :480–499.

¹⁹ Weindling. 'Huxley and the Continuity of Eugenics', 480. 486-87.

²⁰ Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011): 5.

²¹ Dirlik, *Return of the Past*, 286. Sluga 'UNESCO' , 402-405; Lindstrum *Ruling Minds*, 191-92.

²²On related scholarly debates around partition see David Gilmartin, 'The historiography of India's partition: Between civilization and modernity'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 74, 1 (2015): 23-41. Shalini Sharma, 'Hindutva and historical revisionism', *History Workshop*, 20 July 2017 <http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/hindutva-and-historical-revisionism/>; Julian Go. "Postcolonial Possibilities for the Sociology of Race." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 4, 4 (2018), 439–451 offers an important

The UNESCO Tensions project: the science of emotions and post-racial humanism

The first General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) took place in London in late 1946. A product of the internationalist sentiment that reached its peak of influence in the immediate post-war period, the fledging organisation faced the daunting task of turning aspirations for international peace and social justice into workable programmes of research and education. The foundation of the Tensions Project was one early and significant response. Entrusted to and administered by UNESCO's Social Science Department, the Tensions Project ran in seventeen nations between 1947 and 1953.²³ Dominated by social scientists from Europe and North America, but increasingly open to challenge from what would come to be called Third World nations, the Project consisted of an uneasy synthesis of research on nationalism, technology, population and public opinion. It designed and conducted studies on a wide variety of topics, including 'national character', the socialisation of children, the origins of prejudice and violence. The Tensions Project's fragile coherence lay in the conviction, expressed in a public statement issued after two weeks of intensive discussion in July 1948, that wars were 'not a necessary or inevitable consequence of human nature'.²⁴ Wars could be avoided, and international peace secured, if 'group and national tensions and aggressions were kept within manageable proportions' and directed towards 'personally and socially constructive ends'.²⁵

perspective on the need for historical studies on how imperialism generated racial thought and racial stratification and Musab Younis, 'Race, the World and Time: Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia (1914–1945)', *Millennium*, 46, 3 (2019): 352–370 for the persistence of race, and of colonial temporalities, even within sites of black sovereignty.

²³ UNESCO, Department of Social Science, Statement concerning the UNESCO Tensions Project 1949-53. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001793/179399eb.pdf> From an emerging secondary literature see, especially, Teresa Tomas Rangil, *The Politics of Neutrality: UNESCO's Social Science Department, 1946-1956*, CHOPE Working Paper No. 2011-08, April 2011 <https://hope.econ.duke.edu/node/132>; Perrin Selcer, 'Patterns of Science: Developing Knowledge for a World Community at Unesco' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2011) available at <http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/323>

²⁴ UNESCO Archives, Paris (hereafter UAP) 327.5 A 064(44) 48.07. Tensions Affecting International Understanding Expert Meeting, Paris. 'A Statement by Eight Distinguished Social Scientists on the Causes of Tensions that Make for War' July 13 1948, p.1

²⁵ *Ibid.*

These kinds of statements, characteristic of the idealism and optimism that accompanied the foundation of UNESCO, had both political and intellectual implications. Since they knew of ‘no evidence that any ethnic group is inherently inferior’ to any other, these social scientists also declared both colonial exploitation and the oppression of minorities within a nation as incompatible with world peace.²⁶ Yet there was an important temporal caveat. Oppressive or exploitative political systems were inconsistent with peace but only ‘in the long run’. In the short run, the substantive focus of UNESCO social scientists was on the management of individual aggression and tension. Their focus, in other words, was on understanding, and managing, the inner, subjective and emotional, life. The control of destructive emotions—anger, aggression, fear, jealousy and prejudice—was a key part of UNESCO’s intellectual strategy for securing peace by changing the way that people experienced and interpreted social events.²⁷

UNESCO’s science of emotions can be seen therefore as one part of an individualised global rights order which championed the principle of non-discrimination and which made explicitly racial explanations for human behaviour seem increasingly anachronistic.²⁸ As a result, social scientific staff at UNESCO sought a different, or at least significantly modified, vocabulary for the persistence of war, violence and aggression. Core staff on the Tensions Project, those who commissioned and directed research from UNESCO headquarters in Paris and those who directed and managed individual studies, were largely drawn from among

²⁶ Ibid., p.2. The social science signatories were from psychology and psychiatry (Gordon Allport and John Rickman, Harry Stack Sullivan); sociology (Gilberto Freyre, George Gurvitch and Alexander Szalai) philosophy (Max Horkheimer and Arne Neess)

²⁷ Bernard et al, *The Nature of Conflict*, 36, ; Selcer, ‘Patterns of Science’, 141-45.

²⁸ Anthony Q. Hazard, *Postwar Anti-racism: The United States, UNESCO, and “Race,” 1945–1968* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan); Michelle Brattain, ‘Race, racism, and antiracism: UNESCO and the politics of presenting science to the postwar public’, *American Historical Review*, 112, 5 (2007): 1386–1413.

social scientists in the North Atlantic. More specifically, many came from disciplines and departments associated with the racial-liberal knowledge production that objectified difference.²⁹ The North American staff included successive Tensions Project directors, the social psychologists Hadley Cantril and Otto Klineberg; the sociologists Edward Shils, Robert Cooley Angell and Alva Myrdal, and the Tensions Project consultant in India, and psychologist, Gardner Murphy. These men and woman were part of a community of social scientists, formed around UNESCO's efforts in post-war social and educational reconstruction, which promoted work that they understood to be scientifically progressive and in the service of an anti-racist politics.³⁰ They were committed to challenging hereditary theories and deterministic notions of race and declared themselves to be interested in, and attuned to, the variety of human experience. Cantril, Klineberg, Shils, Myrdal, Angell and Murphy all regularly declared the basic similarities of people around the globe and underpinned this apparent universalism by demonstrating what can only be summarised as variable and inconsistent degrees of interest in historical and cultural processes.³¹ Influenced by the refugee intellectuals who arrived in the United States from Nazi Germany, they often invoked historical sociology but, in practice, their use of historical and temporal perspectives was either highly circumscribed by functionalist explanations of social and psychological development or it simply vanished under pressure from a growing sociological scientism that demanded immediate application and concrete results.³²

²⁹ Sluga, 'UNESCO', 393-418; Rangil, 'Politics'. 10-21, 46-51; Weindling. 'Huxley and the Continuity of Eugenics', 484-85, 491 and, more broadly, Jodi Melamed, *Represent and destroy: rationalizing violence in the new racial capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

³⁰ Tomas Rangil, Politics of Neutrality;

³¹ See, for example, the ambitious and interdisciplinary project described by Tensions programme director Otto Klineberg, "Tensions Affecting International Understanding". *Social Science Research Council Bulletin*, 62, 1 (1950): ix-227.

³² Uffa Jensen, 'Across Different Cultures? Emotions in Science during the Early Twentieth Century' in Biess and Gross (eds) *Science and Emotions after 1945*, 263-277.

The cautious attraction to a protean science of emotions can be seen in a detailed memorandum of May 1947 that tried to turn the vague but emphatic statements of the UNESCO Programme Commission into a practical scheme of research. Its author was the American sociologist, and former member of the Allies' Psychological Warfare Division (PWD), Edward Shils. From a purely administrative point of view, Shils was an astute selection for the position of special consultant to the Project. His experience at PWD meant he had worked with a number of both British and American social scientists and, crucially, he had the experience of turning complicated questions around human motivation, behaviour and character structure into workable programmes of social science research.³³ His twenty-two page memorandum, intended as a preliminary statement of research topics and design, was arguably the closest the Tensions Project came to a coherent programmatic declaration of research aims, objectives and design. Its basic themes would be repeated, elaborated and defended in public statements over the next decade.³⁴

The memorandum adopted, or sought to develop, a framework for the systematic study of human behaviour that encompassed studies of individual personality, socialization and education, group relationships and national cultures. Psychoanalysis, or at least a rather imprecise and generalised psychoanalytical language, provided the conceptual framework that sought to explain how individual personality was conditioned, or made, by political and social structures. Tensions, or tendencies to intolerance, aggression and violence, were defined in both psychological (or 'internal') and sociological (or 'external') terms but the

³³ Daniel Pick, *The Pursuit of the Nazi Mind: Hitler, Hess, and the Analysts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206-15; Rangil, *Politics of Neutrality*, 14-23.

³⁴ Hadley Cantril, *The Human sciences and world peace: a report on the UNESCO Project: "Tensions affecting International Understanding"* 30 April 1948 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001581/158131eb.pdf>; Otto Klineberg, *The UNESCO Project on International Tensions: A Challenge to the Sciences of Man*, 30 May 1949 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000158151>; Robert C Angell, *UNESCO and Social Science Research*, *American Sociological Review*, 15, 2 (1950): 282-87.

Project emphasis, in both theoretical and practical terms, remained on the former. Individual psychological tensions were, claimed Shils in a typically sweeping claim, ‘deeply rooted, transmitted through cultures and shaped the way in which people, even elites, approached reality; their sense of their own loyalties and obligations, their own goals and their basic fears’.³⁵ These emotions, and their impact on relationships and identities, would require Project researchers to go deeply back into the formative experiences of childhood and infancy, when all people acquired their ‘demand for love, fears of deprivation, aggressiveness, need for security etc’ and ‘set down a number of implicit hypotheses with which those actors approached the world’.³⁶

Implicit in these passages was the idea that historical processes and events could continue to have causal effects in the present. This was not only the case for individuals but, under the influence of the Frankfurt School and an emerging social psychology, for whole societies too. This perspective mattered because it opened up the possibility that, just like individuals, some societies might have experienced traumas that required reflection, recovery and rehabilitation. However, both the properties of these historical processes and their educational and political implications were a matter for sustained debate not just within psychoanalytical circles but, more broadly, in western social sciences.³⁷ Orthodox psychoanalysts saw these historical processes them as an integral part of individual development. Instinctive sexual drives that were biologically driven and universally experienced, explained both the sources of repression and the emotional contents of the unconscious. Since human emotions and behaviour were determined by biological drives, the primary purpose of psychoanalysis was

³⁵ UAP, 327.5 Tensions Affecting International Understanding Part 1 up to 30/V/47. Shils, ‘Preliminary Outline’, p.4.

³⁶ Ibid.,

³⁷ Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor (eds.) *History and Psyche: Culture, Psychoanalysis and the Past*. (Palgrave Macmillan. 2013); M ffytche, (2017). Psychoanalytic sociology and the traumas of history: Alexander Mitscherlich between the disciplines. *History of the Human Sciences*. 30 (5), 3-29

the understanding, and therapeutic management, of instinctual urges. This was the conventional wisdom of North Atlantic ego-psychology and it produced an emphasis on therapeutic applications that were designed to strengthen the ego and enable the individual to adapt to destructive environments.³⁸ Its attraction to core staff on the Tensions Project is repeatedly visible in the Project archives. Ego-psychology had the frisson of novelty, the authority of science and its focus on the management of individual emotions had identifiable educational applications. It spoke a psychoanalytical language common to all core Tensions staff, even if they themselves were not ego-psychologists. It carried the potential for popularisation and it marginalised, even if not entirely avoided, controversial political questions around the normative structures individuals were expected to adapt to.³⁹

Yet there was an alternative, or at least differently nuanced, science of emotions that was also invoked in Shils' memorandum, signalling a kind of subterranean presence in the Tensions Project. This shared the same basic psychoanalytical approaches to the development and content of the human psyche but it conceptualised emotions as having cultural, rather than biological, origins. Destructive emotions, anxiety, fear and anger, were not the outcome of individual processes of development but culturally conditioned in specific historical circumstances that frustrated or distorted character structures. This position, most closely associated with the Frankfurt School and the refugee scholars who contributed to the so-called culture school of analysts in the United States pointed towards a distinctively historical and sociological account of emotions, their development and their causal consequences for

³⁸ The best general introduction to psychoanalytical schools of thought and their different political and educational implications remains Stephen Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987/1999). Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

³⁹ On the internationalisation of psychoanalysis and its relationship with European modernity and colonial imaginaries see Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson and Richard C. Keller (eds) *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

human behaviour. It was also an account that had the potential to identify traumas that were contained in the collective memory and seek to treat them through pedagogical practice.⁴⁰

The model here was the work of Erich Fromm, who was employed for a short period in 1948 as a Tensions Project tutor, and whose *Escape from Freedom* (1942) offered an influential but speculative account of how specific psychological and social insecurities produced by long-term social change resulted in the authoritarian fascism of Nazi Germany.⁴¹ *Escape from Freedom*'s historical framework, and its geography, was firmly located in Western and Central Europe and, specifically, in the social and cultural changes that followed the Reformation. Tracing the long transformation of medieval European societies, and their colonial possessions, into market economies, or 'modernity', over a period of centuries, Fromm argued that these specific historical circumstances created psychological needs and dispositions not in individuals but in whole cultures. Fromm, in other words, was innovative in ascribing emotions and feeling states to whole cultures and explaining them in terms of specific historical events and processes.⁴²

This alternatively nuanced science of emotions retained a teleology of development. A cultural process of modernisation replaced a biological process of maturation in which 'man' (sic) emerged from nature, advanced religions replaced primitive ones, and modern individuals — free, self-determining and productive — superseded primal ones. Yet, and notwithstanding the fact that history and historical analysis was conceived in teleological and racialized terms, the culture school of psychoanalysis was one of the intellectual currents that

⁴⁰ Peter J. Verovsek, 'Historical criticism without progress: Memory as an emancipatory resource for critical theory', *Constellations* 26 (2019): 132-147.

⁴¹ The recent revival in Fromm's work supplements an already substantial literature. We have drawn on Kieran Durkin, *The Radical Humanism of Erich Fromm* (London: Palgrave, 2014); Neil McLaughlin. "Nazism, Nationalism and the Sociology of Emotions: Escape from Freedom Revisited," *Sociological Theory*, 14:3 (1996):241-261. Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*. (London: Routledge classics edition, 2001/1941).

⁴² McLaughlin, 'Escape from Freedom Revisited', 250-51, 259.

helped to tentatively identify the possibility that specific historical processes and experiences resulted in particular emotional regimes.⁴³

Shils' memorandum was a synthesis that tried to take some utopian statements and turn them into a workable programme of research. The ambition of the task carried with it more than a little hubris. It was at once a theoretical attempt to map a universal mind drawing on new work in dynamic psychology and, at the same time, a practical document considering strategies for change at both the individual and socio-cultural levels in states with different histories and cultures. It represented a level of technocratic ambition that gestured towards a post-racial understanding of humans but which remained constrained by scientific boundary-keeping where only western social science, and often in its most reductive form, was recognised as knowledge.

If some strands of psychoanalysis had the potential for identifying and discussing the legacies of historical processes, for both individuals and whole societies, they were either not identified or simply disregarded. Alternative ways of knowing the world and the people in it appear as traces in the Tensions archives but the epistemology of post-war social science helped to prevent them from becoming a topic for sustained discussion or reflection.⁴⁴

UNESCO's loudly proclaimed global community of experts in fact remained dominated by scholars whose intellectual formation was firmly located in the academic culture and intellectual networks of the transatlantic British World.⁴⁵ It was a world held together by a

⁴³E.J.K Gitre,. The great escape: World War II, neo-Freudianism, and the origins of U.S. psychocultural analysis. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 47, 1 (2011) 18-43; Dirlik, *Return of the Past*, 270.

⁴⁴ UAP, 327.5 Tensions affecting Int Understanding PART II from 1/V/47 up to 30/X/47. No Author, 'Research and Experiment in Education for International Understanding' and whose references to schools and practices outside the psychoanalytical mainstream, including work by Alfred Adler and Carl Jung, suggest some awareness of the different epistemologies and world-views of non-Western cultures. , Klineberg, *Tensions Affecting International Understanding: A survey....* ;Tensions Affecting International Understanding, Progress Report 1948-49 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001581/158153eb.pdf>

⁴⁵ The term 'British world' now has a substantial literature attached to it which is summarised and discussed in Rachel Bright and Andrew Dilley, *After the British World*, *The Historical Journal* 60, 2 (2017) 547-568 . Even though they doubt the utility of the term, a central characteristic of this British world was concerned with the

temporal and affective politics that combined ideas about development with bonds of race, and with the construction and distribution of ideas about whiteness. These ideas did not simply disappear with political independence in India, or as a result of the UNESCO campaign against scientific racism.⁴⁶ In fact, opposition to the emergent UNESCO epistemological universe was quick to emerge and, as we discuss, Indian scientists, administrators and planners were among those intellectuals who began to challenge the knowledge, and the representations, underpinning UNESCO social science.

Time, temporality and the scientific method

The Tensions Project may have been dominated by North American and European social scientists, but the foundation of UNESCO represented a new arena—one in which anti-colonial and nationalist movements could continue to advance their claims for political equality, economic redistribution and social justice. Among them were the social scientists, administrators and planners who represented India at UNESCO. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Ashfaq Husain and Tara Chand were among the Indian actors who identified and criticised the dominance of western knowledge and personnel in the fledging organisation. However, opportunities for them to identify or explain the significance of diverse histories and cultures of the Indian subcontinent were highly circumscribed, not only by their social locations – having been part of the English-educated elite – but also by the epistemic dominance of western social scientific categories of time within the knowledge institutions in which they worked. As the evidence presented here helps to demonstrate, although they often invoked

elaboration of a specifically white identity. The best account of this anxiety is *M. Lake and H. Reynolds, Drawing the global colour line: white men's countries and the international challenge of racial equality* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ Sebastian Gil-Riano 'Relocating anti-racist science: The 1950 UNESCO Statement on Race and economic development in the global South'. *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 51, 2 (2018), 281-303. See the helpful summary of work criticising redemptive narratives of race in Gil-Riano, S. (2014) 'Historicizing Anti-Racism: UNESCO's Campaigns Against Race Prejudice in the 1950s', PhD dissertation, University of Toronto; pp.7-20.

the anticolonial sentiment of the period, their articulation of the legacies of colonialism and their discursive representations of the new citizen and nation were constrained by the developmental temporalities that conditioned their vision.⁴⁷

At the second UNESCO General Conference, held in Mexico City in late 1947, there was already stringent criticism of Anglo-American dominance of the organisation and, more specifically, its failure to identify or understand the legacies of imperial rule. The leader of the delegation from newly independent India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, led this critique by observing to the General Conference that 514 of the 557 strong UNESCO secretariat were from western Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. It was, he argued, a form of ‘cultural fascism’ that ensured the dominance of western approaches to natural and social sciences in the programme of UNESCO. ‘It is assumed that as we have mastered nature by a knowledge of it, we will master human nature by a knowledge of man and his relations in society. It is not so simple’.⁴⁸ Instead, UNESCO had to become more democratic, more representative of the peoples of the world and the diverse forms of knowledge and culture they produced. ‘The only basis of enduring peace’, recorded the official transcript of the Indian delegation’s contribution, was ‘increasing equalisation of standards of living all over the world and the spread of enlightenment in backward areas’. If one part of this programme

⁴⁷ Radhakrishnan and Chand are briefly discussed in Laura Elizabeth Wong, ‘Relocating East and West: UNESCO’s Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values’ *Journal of World History* 19, 3 (2008): 349-74. On Radhakrishnan see Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, ‘Representing Indian Philosophy Through the Nation: an Exploration of the Public Philosopher Radhakrishnan’, *Sophia* 57, (2018): 375-387. Chand’s development historical schema is set out in Tara Chand, *The Impact of Western Civilization on Eastern Ideology and Ways of Life*, *International Social Science Bulletin*, 3, 4 (1951): 779-82. Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, *Representing Indian Philosophy Through the Nation: an Exploration of the Public Philosopher Radhakrishnan*, *Sophia* 57, (2018): 375-387

⁴⁸ Ministry of Education, *UNESCO and India 1946-48* (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1948): See also Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Days of Cultural Tribalism are Over*. *The Unesco Courier*, 12 (December 1958): 4-6.

was rapid industrialisation, another was an attempt to identify, and to elicit from the past, the ‘spiritual and moral principles of Asia, and India in particular’.⁴⁹

What were those principles and how would they inform the new humanism that UNESCO was striving for? Until the formation of the Indian National Commission on UNESCO in 1949, there was no official answer to that question. Instead it is necessary to rely on the statements of Indian actors in global institutions, and the projects of Indian scholars and politicians, to trace the extent to which Indian actors articulated an alternative to UNESCO’s new humanism. There are many such statements, not least because Radhakrishnan’s public criticism of UNESCO had at least two important outcomes. Firstly, the Indian educationalist and civil servant Ashfaq Husain was appointed to the position of Vice Chairman of Working Party on Education for International Understanding founded by the Social Science Department (SSD). Secondly, and in that capacity, Husain was invited to the second major meeting of experts working on the Tensions Project in October 1948 in Royaumont, just outside Paris.

Delegates for the Royaumont meeting were, for the first time, nominated by UNESCO’s National Commissions rather by invitation or selection by the Social Sciences Department (SSD) or Tensions Project team. As a result, they were both geographically and occupationally more diverse than any previous meeting associated with the Tensions Project. Australia, Brazil, Hungary, India, New Zealand and Poland were among the fifteen states represented and only four representatives were working social scientists. Historians and philosophers, as well as public intellectuals, were represented and their presence resulted in a discussion that was philosophically richer and culturally more nuanced than those that had drawn Indian opprobrium in Mexico City in 1947.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education, *UNESCO and India*, 58, 60, 36.

Husain, who chaired and opened the meeting, began by observing that the UNESCO Secretariat, 'consisting as it does overwhelmingly, if not almost entirely, of Western people, is unable to take any but a Western view of things'.⁵⁰ 'Quite unconsciously, when they consider a problem, it is against the Western background and when they speak they address themselves to the USA, UK, France and some other European countries'.⁵¹ The international understanding that the experts were gathered to discuss, and which UNESCO ultimately aimed for, was not an object owned and dispensed by the west but, implicitly at least, a process in which individuals and national cultures would be encouraged to reflect on their own part in both domestic and international tensions. Scornfully dismissive of (British delegate and prominent sociologist) T. H. Marshall's claim that 'the British do not see what is wrong with their attitude towards other people', Husain indulged in some wishful thinking in explaining both the causes of the violence that continued to plague India and in anticipating its imminent end. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims did not exist before British rule, claimed Husain, and because 'it is an obvious truth that alien rule thrives on differences and divisions among the ruled' and that 'some of our problems must necessarily disappear or at least lose their gravity because of the recovery of political independence'.⁵²

Such claims indicate, even if only at the level of generalised discussion, a movement away from the rather esoteric ego psychology and the associated problems of adaptation that had featured so strongly in early UNESCO thinking. Instead, the causes of tension and violence in India were explained, in a notably more accessible language, in social, political and historical terms. In this explanatory schema, it was neither individual psychology, nor the

⁵⁰ UAP, 327.5 Tensions Affecting Int. Understanding PART IV from 1/VII/48 up to 31/XII/48; Report on the Royaumont Conference on the Tensions Project, 8 to 12 October 1948; UAP, 327.5 A 064(44) "48.10" Tensions affecting Int. Understanding Expert Meeting - October 1948, Paris: Report by Ashfaq Husain, p.6. See also (and compare): Recommendations of Delegates at Conference on Methods of Attitude Change Conducive to International Understanding <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001581/158155eb.pdf> that gives Husain's address at Embassy of India,

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.,

operations of defence mechanisms, but the conditions created by imperial rule that gave rise to communal violence.⁵³

Husain's intervention suggested, albeit in the most tentative of terms, that UNESCO was an intellectual arena in which a new humanism, based on a recognition of historical injustices and processes of global knowledge production and exchange, might have emerged. However, evidence in the UNESCO archives reveals that any shift towards post-racial modes of understanding human difference were frustrated by the retention of vocabularies and concepts closely associated with the temporal regimes of colonialism.

This was clearly demonstrated when ten fieldworkers, from Australia, Sweden, France and India, travelled to Paris in the spring of 1949 for research training.⁵⁴ The course tutors, all of them male, all of them white and all of them working in Europe, included Claude Lévi-Strauss, Henry Dicks and the future peace educator Adam Curle. They were tasked with orientating the researchers to disciplinary concepts taken from psychology, anthropology and psychiatry and to training the researchers in their fieldwork application. The magnitude of the task—trying to come up with general laws explaining social tensions in four different countries—seems not to have unduly troubled the organisers who turned to Erich Fromm to design the syllabus.

Fromm was a shrewd choice. He was already becoming a major public intellectual figure whose international reach can be gauged by the translation of his work into more than forty

⁵³ UAP, 327.5 A 064(44) "48.10" Tensions affecting Int. Understanding Expert Meeting - October 1948, Paris: Report by Ashfaque Husain, p.6.

⁵⁴ UAP, 327.5 : 301.18 A 53 Tensions affecting Int. Understanding Community Studies Part I - up to 31/X/49, 'List of attendees for community studies training' 8 June 1949. The Indian delegation were all employed by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Calcutta and comprised B.S. Guha, Ramesh Chandra Nigam (later Registrar-General and Census Commissioner for the 1961 Census operations) and the anthropologist Uma Chowdhury.

languages around the world.⁵⁵ This kind of global success suggests that his specific brand of humanism, derived, as many scholars have noted, from a blending of Freudian and Marxist theory, spoke powerfully to a world scarred by violence and war. His work represented a shift from the Freudian orthodoxies that placed the individual, and their biological development, at the centre of analysis and towards a more historical and sociological form of scrutiny. Human distinctiveness was, for Fromm, guaranteed by both the need and the ability to understand the world through symbols, imagination and reason. These cultural forms were universal but they were also culturally distinctive and individuals, because of their character structure, had different orientations to them. This theoretical system, consisting of macrostructural and micropsychological levels of analysis, not only matched the technocratic ambition of the UNESCO secretariat, but it also had the considerable political advantage of appearing more democratic, more global and internationalist, than the decidedly Western social science that had previously drawn such ire.⁵⁶

Fromm's contribution to research training centred on methods for exploring the myths, memories and dreams held by ordinary people. In fact, the methods training that Fromm devised for Project researchers covered dream analysis, the study of folklore and interviews, as well questionnaires and projective tests. All were designed to uncover 'latent and frequently disguised psychic tendencies' that were, in turn, related to phases of economic and social development of particular cultures. These supposed psychic tendencies, unknown and unconscious to the subject, reflected the distinctive historical experiences of different cultures and they bear more than passing resemblance to the affective or embodied histories that remain of interest to sociologists and social psychologists.⁵⁷ The well-established themes of

⁵⁵ Erich Fromm Institute, 'Book Titles by Erich Fromm and Translations' at <http://fromm-online.org/wp-content/uploads/25.pdf> [last accessed 12 February 2019]

⁵⁶ McLaughlin. 'Escape from Freedom Revisited', 242-43.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Norman Gabriel, 'Growing Up in Society - A Historical Social Psychology of Childhood', *Historical Social Research* 42, 4 (2017): 207-226 for the centrality of psychoanalytical language (if not theory)

psychoanalytical research—parent-child relationships, authority and freedoms in child care, modes of discipline and conflicts between generations—were all practices that carried historical freight. Fromm’s advice to researchers in the field was explicit. A developmental framework of phases and stages, into which individuals, families, communities and nations could all be placed, became central to the Tensions research programme as it was translated into action.⁵⁸ Chronological time, linear and universal, provided a kind of abstract container into which discrete events and people could be gathered, synchronised and compared. This shared and homogeneous understanding of time was thus a crucial component of global simultaneity.⁵⁹ It created, as Lynn Hunt has argued, ‘the potential for recurrent revision, for going back and fishing out previously unnoticed events from the river of time and making them central to new narratives’.⁶⁰ Absolute and homogeneous time was, in one sense, democratic, because it was universal. Everybody was contained within it and all stories were, in principle, of equal ontological weight.

Yet it was also, as many scholars have argued, an imperialist form of time.⁶¹ For despite a declared interest in cultural difference and despite the influence of various streams of psychoanalytical thought, in its understanding of individual and social pathologies, and in its vision of the resolution of these pathologies, the Tensions Project consistently produced normative visions of the past and the future. Progress towards tolerance and peace would be achieved without recognising, far less addressing, the global inequalities produced by

for explaining stratification and Kieran Durkin’s defence of the possibilities offered by Fromm’s radical humanism for promoting justice and equality. Durkin, *Radical Humanism of Erich Fromm*, especially chapter 5.

⁵⁸UAP, 327.5 : 301.18 A 53, Tensions affecting Int. Understanding Community Studies Part I - up to 31/X/49, Erich Fromm, Training in psychological methods’ 25 Jan 1949

⁵⁹ Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory and State-Sponsored Violence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012): 107-109.

⁶⁰ Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History*. New edition [online]. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008 (generated 24 August 2018). Available on the Internet: <<http://books.openedition.org/ceup/810>>. ISBN: 9786155211485.

⁶¹ Ashis Nandy, ‘History’s Forgotten Doubles’, *History and Theory*, 34, 2, (1995) 44-66; Sanjay Seth, ‘Travelling theory: Western knowledge and its Indian object’, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 21, 4 (2011): 263-282.;

colonialism. In practice, this meant that Tensions scholars were intolerant of any form or language of experience that could not be assimilated to a European model of historical development. Adam Curle, an Oxford University graduate in History and Anthropology, with fieldwork experience in the Middle East and who took leave from his job at the Tavistock Institute rehabilitating war veterans to teach on the Tensions Project training course, was not an obvious proponent for a dogmatic Western social science. However, Curle appeared oblivious to the possibility that the many languages, belief systems and cosmologies that made up newly independent India could have competing ideas about, and experiences of, both past and present. Instead, the term ‘fantastic’ was used as an antonym for rationality and societies experiencing conflict and tension were judged to be stuck in an:

‘emotional lag which prevents people from accepting the reality of new situations and retards the emergence of fresh and more appropriate structures...Such escape mechanisms may become stereotyped and institutionalised in primitive society, where they have a long time to develop, but in modern society, in which a major trend of development is the freeing of the individual from the bonds of taboo and fantasy, they only cause an additional frustration and misery which very is apt to find an outlet in violence’.⁶²

The violence that accompanied Indian independence and partition was understood as an integral part of this transition to ‘modern society’.⁶³ Yet, Curle worried that Tensions studies would not produce commensurable data ‘not only because of the varying cultural background of the investigators, but also because, not coming tabula rasa to Paris, they have not

⁶² UAP, 327.5: 301.18 A 53 Tensions affecting Int. Understanding Community Studies Part I - up to 31/X/49. Adam Curle, ‘Some Notes on Social Method and Theory in relation to Community Studies, p.2.

⁶³ See, for example, the account of historical change in India narrated in Gardner Murphy, *In the Minds of Men*, (New York: Basic, 1953): 29-59, which remains the best summary of the Unesco Tensions project in India. Also Chand, *Impact of Western Civilization on Eastern Ideology*, 781.

absorbed a common body of concepts and techniques'.⁶⁴ The Indian fieldworkers were presented as a particular problem because although they 'seemed to understand his overall points', and although 'what they do with primitives should be very good', they were

'in a peculiar way twisting them out of context to fit into a mode of thought which basically derived from an alien culture rather than from a shared scientific training...what slightly alarmed me was that they were using Freudian (among other) concepts, but using them in a piece-meal way, all mixed up unconsciously with bits of Hindu philosophy, in such a fashion that they were meaningless'.⁶⁵

These observations, tellingly suggestive of the anxiety that cross-cultural research could provoke in a self-proclaimed progressive anthropologist, consigns Hindu philosophy to an alien culture outside of, and dichotomous to, science. That culture was a site of incompleteness. Its contact with western science, and specifically with orthodox Freudian theory, threatened to render science meaningless. Such judgements, disguised as practical problems of method, may best be understood as powerful acts of boundary making, all the more important for the fact that the researchers so decisively dismissed in this instance all worked on the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI), established by the British colonial authorities in December 1945 and which, most obviously in the work of Harvard educated Biraja Sankar Guha, were closely associated with mapping, tabulating and, where necessary protecting, the imagined races of India.⁶⁶ Yet if Guha's racialized version of culture was judged

⁶⁴ UAP, 327.5: 301.18 A 53 Tensions affecting Int. Understanding Community Studies Part I - up to 31/X/49. Curle to Klineberg 17 May 49.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ This period in the history of Indian anthropology remains under-researched. Abhijit Guha, *In Search of Nationalist Trends in Indian Anthropology: Opening a New Discourse*. (Kolkata: Institute of Development Studies Occasional Paper 62, 2018) available at <http://idsk.edu.in/occasional-papers/> has some important empirical detail but is not exhaustive and unconvincingly argues for Guha's work as secular and benignly nationalist. The other two scholars with B.S. Guha were Ramesh Chandra Nigam, later Registrar-General and Census Commissioner for the 1961 Census operations and the anthropologist Uma Chowdhury.

incompatible with modern science, there was no criticism, nor even comment, about the particular brand of racial anthropology that he practised and represented. The silence is, perhaps, revealing. Guha's upper caste anthropology, and its measurement of noses and head shapes, demonstrated an 'absolute faith in the racial separation of upper and lower castes', argues historian Projit Bihari Mukharji, and was an important resource for the retention and renewal of race ideas in postcolonial India.⁶⁷ It certainly did not disrupt, and may have reinforced, the evolutionary framework of UNESCO scholars.⁶⁸ It was certainly also a noteworthy presence in Project correspondence and in the substantive studies produced in India.⁶⁹

In practice, when research got underway in India, it demonstrated a more imaginative but hardly less innovative approach to historical and cultural difference. In the public account of the American consultant to the Indian Tensions Projects, the social psychologist Gardner Murphy, it was Pars Ram who played a leading role in both organising the studies, and trying to develop a more empathetic understanding of Indian history and culture. Ram was a former Ford Foundation scholar, a refugee from Pakistan and a lay psychoanalyst whose analysis of communal tensions in Aligarh had a richer historical sensibility than those studies where personhood was reduced to a series of identical survey questions. Yet even Ram's analysis of 'Muslim insecurity', and 'minority psychology' in newly independent India, was framed by a conventional and scientific historical narrative, organised around homogeneous time that

⁶⁷ Projit Bihari Mukharji, 'The Bengali Pharaoh: Upper-Caste Aryanism, Pan-Egyptianism, and the Contested History of Biometric Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Bengal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 59, 2 (2017): 456.

⁶⁸ Sluga, 'One World', 402-5; Rangil, 'Politics of Neutrality', 40-41.

⁶⁹ See, for example, UAP, 327.5 Tensions affecting International Understanding PART II from 1/VI/47 up to 30/X/47, Selected Responses from academics to Shils' Proposal: Chattopadhyaya to Broderson, 31 July 1947; Indian National Commission for UNESCO, Project for Research on Social Tensions, 13 November 1951, Annex A lists 11 separate studies. Publication from these studies was erratic. The best overview of the work is contained in Murphy, *Minds of Men*. Other notable studies, displaying universalist inspiration and a concern with designing and developing tests include B. S. Guha, *Studies in Social Tension Among the Refugees from Eastern Pakistan* (Calcutta: Department of Anthropology, Government of India, 1959); N.L. Dosajh, 'A Psychological Study of the Various Tensions Prevalent Among Refugees Residing in Ahmedabad Area', *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 8, 28 (1953): 39-46. See also Rangil, 'Politics of Neutrality', 47-48.

identified a distinctively Islamic culture of history and science. In his accompanying analysis of intercommunal rumour, anxiety and violence, Ram proposed that conflicting time perspectives helped to explain the atrocities committed at partition.⁷⁰ The expansion of time perspectives was understood as a key part of the child's developing cognitive abilities, where the capacity to discern dreams from reality, and to anticipate and plan for the future, was understood as an important marker on the journey towards a mature adulthood.⁷¹ In Ram's analysis, Hindu and Muslim time perspectives not only clashed, they had also, in a phrase redolent of colonial science that served to rule through the imposition of difference, 'not yet' reached a stage where they could be deployed for the purposes of intercommunal communication and understanding.⁷² The problem, for Ram, was 'the vast span of time conceived by Hindu cosmology, the agelessness of all reality, as contrasted with the dynamic or explosive nature of Muslim history, with event crowding upon event'.⁷³

If, as Aria Laskin has argued, the late colonial period saw the emergence of a distinctively Indian psychology that blended modern scientific authority with ancient tropes, it did not dispense with notions of time and development that had become integral to the centres of social science knowledge production associated with the west. Indeed, in the psychological, anthropological and interdisciplinary research sponsored by UNESCO, the same basic conceptual architecture continued to reproduce racialized accounts of social change.⁷⁴ Similar arguments can be made about the disciplines of economics and sociology, and about the

⁷⁰ Pars Ram and Gardner Murphy, 'Recent investigations of Hindu-Muslim relations in India', *Human Organization*, 11, 2 (1952): 13-16.

⁷¹ Kurt Lewin, 'Field Theory and Experiment in Social Psychology: Concepts and Methods', *American Journal of Sociology*, 44, 6 (1939): 868-96

⁷² Catherine Hall, 'Making colonial subjects: education in the age of empire', *History of Education*, 37, 6 (2008): 773-787.

⁷³ Murphy, *In the Minds of Men*, 151.

⁷⁴ For one detailed account from developmental psychology see Arathi Sriprakash, Peter Sutoris and Kevin Myers, 'The science of childhood and the pedagogy of the state: Postcolonial development in India, 1950s'. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 19, 32 (2019): 345–359.

emerging areas studies paradigm, too.⁷⁵ As we discuss below, even when Indian scholars and politicians, working through the epistemic consequences of political decolonisation, attempted to identify the distinctive culture of the east, and even when they turned towards philosophy to do so, an imperialist form of time continued to assert its authority. The rich and diverse historiographies of the Indian subcontinent remained as elusive to them as they would to a later generation of postcolonial scholars.⁷⁶

Humanism and Education: East and West

The Tensions Project, UNESCO's first attempt to develop a global research programme in the causes and consequences of aggression and violence, would remain tied to an intellectual framework developed in the west. The criticism and the lobbying of Indian politicians and scholars had enabled a geographically more diverse set of voices to join the Project but it had not significantly altered its epistemological framing. Indian dissatisfaction with this position was evident in the decision of the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO to design and host a major seven-day seminar held at Parliament House in New Delhi in December 1951 that offered an alternative vision of a new humanism. UNESCO sponsored, but outside the remit of the Tensions Project, the East-West seminar, as it would become retrospectively known. The seminar was notably more international and, at once, more philosophical, humanistic and historical than the normative developmental schemas that tended to dominate the thinking of central Tensions Project staff. This was at least partly because the East-West seminar was organised by, and bore the imprint of, Indian actors associated with the Vedantist tradition. Swami Siddheshwarananda, a monk of the social welfare and educationally-orientated Ramakrishna Mission, co-wrote (with French

⁷⁵ Gil-Riano, 'Relocating anti-racist science', 298-303. Nicholas B. Dirks, *Autobiography of an Archive: A Scholars Passage to India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), chapter 12.

⁷⁶ Nandy, *History's Forgotten Doubles*, 58-60; V. N. Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800* (Ranikhet, 2001).

comparative philosopher and Indologist Olivier Lacombe) the framing documents for the meeting.⁷⁷ Philosopher and future President of India Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, valued by Nehru for ‘his ability to project at home and abroad the moral gravity and uniqueness of India’ chaired it.⁷⁸ Humayan Kabir, educationalist and co-author of the UNESCO statement on race, was one of four Indian philosophers invited by the Indian government, all of whom were associated with studying Vedanta and, either uniquely or in combination with Sufism, expressing Indian identity.⁷⁹ This was, in short, a distinctively spiritual and philosophical brand of humanism that was at once internationalist but also rooted in religious ideals and concepts. So while the official and published account of the seminar promoted ‘universal values’, ‘patriotic humanism’ and ‘creative and aesthetic education’ the contributions of the Indian actors were framed around the claim that ‘religion in India was the basis of ethics and philosophy’.⁸⁰ Maulana Azad supplemented that claim with the argument that the ‘fatalism’ of both Vedanta and Sufism had been an ‘impediment to human progress on the secular plane’.⁸¹ As a result, and as in other spaces of political and educational debate, these figures represented themselves, and understood their work, as adapting these philosophical beliefs for the post war world.⁸²

Indian control of the seminar’s agenda was also reflected in the geography and academic backgrounds of the twelve eminent specialists invited to attend the meeting after consultation

⁷⁷ *Humanism and Education in East and West. An International Roundtable Discussion Organised by UNESCO.* (Paris: UNESCO, 1963).

⁷⁸ For this judgement see C.A. Bayly, ‘The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru’s India’. *Modern Intellectual History* 12, no. 3 (2015): 625.

⁷⁹ The four philosophers were Radhakrishnan, Ras Vihary Das, A. R. Wadia and Kabir. The first two were closely associated with the study and use of Vedanta. On A. R. Wadia see his comments on ‘The Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in East and West’ in *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 184. More generally, S. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Muirhead (eds) *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936); Sherman, ‘A new type of revolution’, 497-8.

⁸⁰ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 22-23.

⁸¹ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 9, 29-38, 193-99. See also the remarkable two volume Ministry of Education sponsored history of philosophy in which Vedanta are presented as the source of Indian civilization and culture. S. Radhakrishnan, A. R. Wadia, D. M. Datta and Humayun Kabir (eds) *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western* (London: George Allen and Unwin 1952 and 1953).

⁸² Kirloskar-Steinbach, ‘Representing Indian Philosophy’ 380-81; Sherman, ‘A new type of revolution’, 497-98.

with the UNESCO National Commissions. Six of these specialists came from Europe (two from France and one each from Germany, Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom) but only one was from the United States. Five more represented Ceylon, Egypt, India, Japan and Turkey.⁸³ The academic backgrounds of the delegates was dominated by philosophy but there were also specialists in Indian culture and history. These specialists, it should be emphasised, were exclusively male and none recognised, still less represented, the concerns of Dalit or Adivasi movements.⁸⁴

The East-West seminar tried to position itself as distinct from instrumental attempts to solve the traumas of the post-war world. Lacombe's and Siddheswarananda's background briefing papers, distributed to participants in advance of their meeting, anticipated 'an atmosphere of candour and impartiality proper to philosophical contemplation'. It summarised, and then set out to challenge, a binary terminology of the 'East' and the 'West' and there were repeated caveats and warnings about the simplifications involved in the idea of two civilisations, one material and one spiritual, destined to clash. Insistently and anxiously repeated, these warnings indicate that global politics, and especially the tensions caused by rapid decolonisation in Asia, influenced how cultural difference was identified and discussed. Delegates both 'accepted [the] contrast between East and West' and emphasised 'the danger of over-stressing this contrast'. A summary of the position at the end of the third day of discussion captures the uncertain and pensive mood. There were, in fact, 'deep divergences'

⁸³ Five of the delegates were current or former professors of philosophy: Radhakrishnan; Ras Vihary Das, A.R. Wadia, Kabir and Gunapala Piyasona Malalasekera (1899-1973), philosopher, educational administrator, public intellectual and diplomat. Two were primarily recognised as educators in elite institutions; John Christie (1899-1980), formerly headmaster of the elite public schools, Repton and Westminster, and recently appointed Principal of Jesus College, Oxford and Clarence H. Faust (1901-1975) of Stanford University and the Ford Foundation. Two more, the German Indologist and religious scholar Helmuth von Glasenapp (1891-1963) and Yensho Kanakura (1896-?) of Tokyo University, specialised in Indian culture and religion. Two were writers of a philosophical or romantic bent: Albert Beguin (1901-1957) and Andre Rousseaux (1896-1973). The delegates were completed by Jacques Rueff (1896-1978) economist and philosopher; Hilmi Ziya Ulken (1901-1974) sociologist; Ibrahim Madkour (1902-1995), linguist, philosopher and politician.

⁸⁴ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 8-9, 216-22. 4. On Dalit political organisation see Vijay Prashad, *Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community* (Delhi, 2000).

between cultures, caused by geography, climate and culture, but these differences were not easily organised into the categories of 'East/West'.⁸⁵ Yet, and notwithstanding these differences, delegates also searched for a vocabulary, and a tone, that might have provided the basis for a new kind of global humanism.

A powerful strand of conference discussion was concerned with sketching out the histories of the philosophical doctrine of humanism. This was not, noted the official conference record, a western body of thought or tradition but a human inheritance which had been formed throughout the ages and amid various civilisations.⁸⁶ Almost all delegates traced the provenance of humanism to ancient Greece but a consistent current in the discussion was to identify Eastern philosophical traditions. Union Minister of Education's Maulana Azad's lecture, given in Hindi, identified an Islamic humanism, based on the work of scholars like Avicenna and Al Ghazzali. There were frequent references, in written text and discussion, to the teachings of the Upanishads, Tagore and Gandhi, and to Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.⁸⁷ In a meeting dominated by philosophers, this should perhaps not be noteworthy. Yet, even now, argues Morimichi Kato, scholars continue to neglect humanistic traditions that originate in Asia.⁸⁸ The point is that there was an attempt to identify and discuss humanism, and its relationship to political organization and education, from different geographical and cultural perspectives. What did these perspectives produce?

One source of agreement was around the achievements of western science. Swami Siddheswarananda warned delegates 'that efficient steps have to be taken to liquidate illiteracy and hunger and illness' and both the technical knowledge, and technical

⁸⁵ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 22.

⁸⁶ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 19

⁸⁷ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 29-30, 117, 183-4.

⁸⁸ M. Kato, Humanistic Traditions, East and West: Convergence and divergence. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 48, 1 (2016), 23-35. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p.28.

achievements, attributed to the West were plainly acknowledged in the second conclusion of the conference that endorsed ‘man’s [sic] power to master nature by technology’.⁸⁹ Indian delegates were especially keen to discuss the various ways in which the ‘primary necessities of life’, to use Nehru’s phrase, could be produced but in a manner consistent with ‘some kind of an ideal or object’. Yet, in almost plaintive terms, Nehru reflected that he could not articulate that ideal or object. He had only doubts and difficulties. The arrival of mechanical civilization brought great triumphs but decayed the mind and the spirit. Diminished creative imagination, he argued, posed global dangers for all.⁹⁰

A related critique of scientism was also developed through the seminar. Although scientism was not clearly defined, speakers lined up to complain about the damaging consequences of the western emphasis on science, about the ‘scientific materialism’ regrettably exported from the West to the East, the deplorable ‘industrial and militaristic uses of science’ and about the application of ‘methods of scientific enquiry to the problems of human personality’.⁹¹ Azad specifically identified evolutionary thought, from Darwin, through Marx and to Freud, the very intellectual framework so central to Fromm, as the culmination of the ‘materialist and scientific temper’. This impoverished vision of ‘man’ underpinned the epistemology of Western science but it not only missed central elements of what it meant to be human. It had also had catastrophic consequences politically and educationally around the world. Human spirituality and personality, a sense of humility at the mysteries of the world and of the divine, all were discussed as possible types of human universals that, the delegates agreed, had been either sacrificed or marginalised in the west at the table of science, reason and progress.

⁸⁹ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 20.

⁹⁰ Nehru’s spiritualism, or more precisely his apparent lack of it, is reinterpreted in Sherman ‘A new type of revolution’, especially 497-98.

⁹¹ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 12, 15, 17, 115, 195

The force of this critique was, despite the scholarly tone and the academic milieu, both intellectually and politically important. Politically, India was emerging as a leader of the nascent Third World project precisely because, as we have seen, its politicians and intellectuals but also, in a ‘socialism of scarcity’, its cultural workers and community activists, were engaged in an attempt to imagine new peoples, new communities and new nations.⁹² Intellectually, actors from these Third World nations tried to, or often claimed to, develop cultures, and forms of solidarity, not rooted in racial division or national chauvinisms but on more inclusive grounds of education, peace and social justice.⁹³ Yet the attempt of these elite Indian delegates to identify and define universal values and entitlements, but also to render those meaningful in specifically national, religious or ‘Eastern’ terms, proved elusive. Among the many reasons for this failure may have been the fact that the consensus position of the seminar was that ‘the typical *attitudes* of Eastern and Western man are the products of evolution and in the process of time could be modified by cultural contact’.⁹⁴ If this signalled a movement away from racial determinism, it did not occasion much reflection, nor much debate, about the ultimate destination for this process of evolution. Time, and notions of development, were imagined as independent historical forces moving inexorably to an inevitable destination. Indeed, when ‘one or two Western members of the seminar’ questioned one of the Indian professors about ‘the Hindu view of history’ he ‘admitted that any philosophy which regarded time as unreal could not attach much importance to the study of history.’⁹⁵ Both the defensive tone of the term ‘admit’, and the implicit necessity of ‘Western’ history for understanding individuals and their behaviour, indicate again the power

⁹² On the implications of the ‘socialism of scarcity’ for education policy and practice see Taylor C. Sherman, ‘Education in early postcolonial India: expansion, experimentation and planned self-help’, *History of Education*, 47:4 (2018), 504-520. The specific position of refugees in ideas about the nation and rehabilitation is in Udit Sen, *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation After Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

⁹³ Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 12, 45.

⁹⁴ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 25

⁹⁵ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 20.

of temporal regimes to exclude. For the local idioms and cultures of the subaltern, and the diverse histories that they represented, remained submerged, and often unintelligible, to a postcolonial Indian state that, whatever the formal constitutional position, failed to dismantle, and often overlooked, a hierarchical caste system based on ideas about race and gender.⁹⁶ Tellingly, there was no discussion, or indeed even recognition of, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and other anti-caste scholars and activists within the record of the seminar.⁹⁷

If the seminar was alluding presciently to the difficulties inherent in establishing a unified post-independence state, there was little practical discussion about what might be done about them. There was, at a fairly abstract level, agreement that spirit, imagination, aesthetic values and the recognition of individual dignity were all important and integral parts of education. Humayun Kabir best summarised a vague sense that ‘knowledge of the inner as well as the outer world was a function of education’.⁹⁸ Yet, how to develop it remained much less clear. There were diverse views around the role of religion in education, a smattering of references to progressive educational thought, most of it Western, and some discussion of Tagore and Gandhi’s educational teachings. Beyond this, however, the forms and functions of education remained absolutely conventional and entirely consistent with the model inherited from colonial rule. The ‘facile idealism’ promoted by ‘champions of democratic education’ should remember, noted one unnamed Indian delegate, that many people ‘had neither the desire nor the power to rise to appreciation of the higher values’ and pointedly asked whether ‘were they in reality any different from animals?’⁹⁹ Even if this direct comparison with animals attracted some dissent, the shared understanding of the conference delegates was that

⁹⁶ Arundhati Roy ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ in B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste* (Crawley. Western Australia: Navayana, 2014 annotated critical edition), 15-179.

⁹⁷ For discussion of Ambedkar’s ideas see Roy, ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ and, more recently, Jesus Francisco Chairez-Garza, ‘B. R. Ambedkar, Franz Boas and the Rejection of Racial Theories of Untouchability’ *South Asia: Journal of South Asia Studies* 41, 2 (2018): 281-296.

⁹⁸ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 114

⁹⁹ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 20.

education would consist of formal but differentiated institutions whose management and supervision was a central function of nation states. Educational actors may have slowly dropped the biological language of race but the attribution of animal characteristics to fellow citizens, rendering them ‘ineducable’, is clearly suggestive of the eugenic assumptions that continued to both produce and discipline racialized categories of people.¹⁰⁰

In fact, and whether delegates were discussing philosophical traditions, the design of educational systems or problems of poverty, the myths of modernity, and what Sunil Khilani has termed the ‘bright arc of the West’s history’, conditioned and framed their debate.¹⁰¹ The tantalising possibility, hinted at in the single substantive point of disagreement in the general conclusions of the conference, that there were other ways of imagining the past, the present and the future, was not taken up.¹⁰² The topic of the disagreement was time and eternity:

On this topic, members really were divided, and nothing approaching a conclusion was reached. To the Western mind, time was a reality and a history a study of basic importance. To some Eastern thinkers, though not all, time was an unreality, and hence history was a subject of little importance, although this did not represent the views of Islam, which had produced notable historians.¹⁰³

Even though delegates tried to avoid presenting a kind of Manichean choice, between the ‘active, progressive West, drunk with the sense of its own success’, over against the ‘passive, contemplative East’, stepping outside of western social science, and rejecting the

¹⁰⁰ For the continued production and use of ineducable as a stigmatized identity see R. Subrahmanian ‘Education Exclusion and the Development State’ in R. Chopra, and P. Jeffery, (eds.), *Educational Regimes in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

¹⁰¹ Sunil Khilani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999 edn.), 76. Gurminder K. Bhabra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

¹⁰² See Roy ‘The Doctor and the Saint’, 49-50 for the analysis of the resulting classic battle between tradition and modernity.

¹⁰³ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 24.

evolutionary thought central to it, proved ultimately elusive.¹⁰⁴ For the ‘notion of time, and therefore of history, as *maya*, unreality....could not be reconciled to ideas that generally pervaded in the West’.¹⁰⁵ The contributions of Nehru, Radhakrishnan, Kabir and other Indian speakers in 1951 to the seminars were, therefore, characteristically syncretic. They challenged the simplifications of racial theory, explained some spiritual and cultural traditions from India, discussed knowledge produced in the West and expressed hope for the possibilities of cross-cultural exchange. Their detailed arguments were, of course, different. Ultimately, however, all of these actors alluded to the claim put most starkly by the philosopher and educationalist A.R. Wadia, that ‘India would have to learn through contact with the virile West that life was more than a dream and something too concrete to be dealt with lightly’.¹⁰⁶

The conceptual frames deployed by these men did not, and could not, address the concept of sociogenesis embedded in Western historical thought. It remained tied to evolutionary accounts of national development that explain the Orientalist injunctions for India to wake up, and catch up, with the ‘developed West’. It thus tended to inherit, rather than excavate, the collective identities, and the terminologies of race and gender, that developed during colonial rule.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The era of decolonization inaugurated by Indian political independence was a moment of possibility for the social sciences. If newly independent nations sought a break with the past, so too did international social scientists appear to seek new, and more complex accounts of personhood no longer constrained by determinist accounts of race. This aspiration was, of

¹⁰⁴ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 14, 38

¹⁰⁶ *Humanism and Education in East and West*, 190.

¹⁰⁷ Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 55-62.

course, central to the foundation of UNESCO and its first major programme of research. The Tensions Project, as it came to be known, identified emotions as a universal feature of human subjectivity but, as we have demonstrated, the fear and anxiety understood to explain violence remained conditioned by their location within the racialized temporalities of the modern social sciences. Emotions, like nations, were designated backward or modern, and their distribution, expression and management, a matter for research and educational intervention. Even when Tensions Project staff approached ideas that might have disrupted or complicated these temporalities, ideas that emanated in Western science, they did not actively explore or attempt to apply them. In the archival evidence examined here for example, it was only the most mainstream ego-psychology, whose focus was on the adaptation of biological drives through education and therapy and which proved accommodating to the most racialized forms of anthropology, appeared to be taken seriously by Tensions staff.

This position was not significantly altered when the first generation of politicians and scholars from independent India demanded, and gained, an active voice in UNESCO. Under their direction, the search for a new humanism became geographically more diverse and it drew on a wider range of knowledge forms and cultures. Yet it remained elitist and, it was dominated by a scholarship that reproduced a colonial logics of time in which individuals, cultures and nations were evolving or developing from the 'primitive' to the 'modern'. In this work race ideas became less overt, but they remained a crucial presence, expressed in a diverse set of vocabularies that moved across social science disciplines, but which were united by particular concepts of time. There were refugees who needed rehabilitating, children who needed developing, tribes in need of protection, villagers who needed to adapt,

but underneath them all was an imperialist time and an evolutionary account of change modelled on the European model of modernity.¹⁰⁸

Sixty years after the East-West seminar in New Delhi, UNESCO, searching for a new humanism for the 21st century, published a magazine containing extracts from that earlier meeting that pointed to, in its own words, its earlier attempt bring ‘Eastern and Western cultures closer together’.¹⁰⁹ Both the selected extracts, and the academic contributions to the publication covered familiar ground; the long history of humanism, a dissatisfaction with the East/West binary, the importance of holistic understanding of humans and their moral obligations to each other and to the planet. There were, however, no references to temporalities, or to how contemporary understanding of past/present relations, condition the production of social scientific knowledge. The new humanism, it might be suggested, still needs to decolonise the old.

¹⁰⁸ For indicative examples see *International Social Science Bulletin: Documents on South East Asia*, 4, 4, (1951). The term development appears 278 times over 241 pages. For the persistence of race beyond colonialism, and its work in work in hierarchizing juridical equality, see Younis, ‘Race, the World and Time’.

¹⁰⁹ *The UNESCO Courier*, ‘Humanism: a new idea’ October-December 2011, 27.
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