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Contents

From the Editor

Featured Essays

Humanism of Kabir and Gandhi : Their Relevance Today

Saral Jhingran

(Re)locating Northern Modernity: Lines of Tension of the Network Society Model, Looking at *Possible Modernities*

Vando Borghi

Women for Science in Brazil

Alice Abreu

In Conversation with Aihwa Ong

Interview by *Vineeta Sinha*

International Sociological Association e-bulletin

From the Editor

In the spirit of diversity, this issue of the E-Bulletin carries contributions from different parts of the world – India, Italy, Brazil, Malaysia and the USA. The three featured essays straddle a range of topics from Saral Jhingran's piece 'Humanism of Kabir and Gandhi: Their Relevance Today' to Vando Borghi's exciting paper on '(Re)locating Northern Modernity: Lines of Tension of the Network Society Model, Looking at *Possible Modernities'* and Alice Abreu's critical article on ' Women for Science in Brazil.' The 'In Conversation' segment of the ISA E-Bulletin continues to draw interest and I am pleased to carry here an interview with a prominent anthropologist, Prof. Aihwa Ong. She was based recently at the Asia Research Institute in Singapore and I had an opportunity to speak with her about her research, both past and current, and her views on Anthropology. As always, I welcome the input of ISA members in order to make this Bulletin an international forum for engaging issues of relevance to social scientists everywhere.

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Humanism of Kabir and Gandhi: Their Relevance Today

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Hinduism has an unfortunate unique distinction of being a composite religion-culture with a vast gap between its high philosophy and actual praxis. On the one hand, Hinduism declares the high philosophy of Vedanta, according to which the same Absolute, called indiscriminately *Atman* or *Brahman,* is the Self of all human beings, nay all creation. The Absolute does not only dwell in every heart, it is the Self, the very essence of every living being.[1] In a poetic style, an Upaniṣadic *ṛṣi* (seer) declares:

Thou art woman, Thou art man. Thou art youth and maiden too. Thou as an old man

totterest along a staff; it is Thou alone who when born assumes diverse forms.[2]

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[1] See *Chandogya Upanisad* III 14.1; VI. 8.4, 7; *Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.7.3 ff; IV.4.5 ff.; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* III. 1.1. (Nikhilananda, 1963)
[2] *Śwetāśwatāra Upaniṣad* IV.3.4

As such, there cannot be any rational-spiritual basis to make hierarchical distinctions between one human being and another. The *Bhagvadgīta* similarly asserts the sublime vision of the divinity within all selves:

 The yogi who, established in oneness, worships Me abiding in all beings lives in

 Me, howsoever he may be active.[3]

While it goes to the credit of the Upaniṣadic *ṛṣis* (seers) that having pronounced their grand vision of the divinity and unity of all human beings have never suggested any discrimination between man and man, this cannot be said of all other Hindu texts. The *Bhagavadgīta,* having declared the essential unity of all selves, goes on to propound compulsory duties according to one's *varṇa* (hereditary groups of castes) which it calls *swadharma* (duty according to one's hereditary caste-profession), and declares that in all circumstances, the fulfillment of one's own duty is better than pursuing another's duty or *dharma*, even if the latter is better. The *Gīta* goes on to define the duties of the four *varṇas*, and declares that their distinction is based upon the inherent qualities (*guṇas*) and capacities of various people, thus taking the social distinctions to a deeper level.[4]

 Dharmaśāstras (religious law books), as those of Manu, Gautam and Yājñavalkya, only hardened these distinctions and arranged them in a hierarchy from which there was no escape for any one, especially the śūdras (the group of lowest castes). Manu arrogantly declares that even if the master of a śūdra *dasa* (slave) frees him from bondage, there is no

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[3] *Bhagavadgīta* VI. 31. (Radhakrishnan 1977)
[4] *Ibid*., XVIII. 41-48.

freedom for him as the natural *dharma* of a śūdra is serving others.[5] The worst aspect of the caste distinctions propagated by these Dharmaśāstras was in the field of justice.[6]

Śaṅkara, the great Advaitin (Indian monist), who declared the complete identity of the Absolute and the entire creation, endorsed the injunction of the *Gautam Dharma Sūtra* sanctioning inhuman punishments for a śūdra who dared to read Vedas.[7] Not only such a social order is very inhuman and cruel, it also rejects its own philosophy.

It was only in the Bhakti (devotional theism) movement that the full implications of the grand Vedantic vision were fully articulated. The Bhakti movement started in third-fourth centuries in Tamil Nadu and spread to the whole subcontinent. It continued to influence and rejuvenate the masses till about seventeenth century. The main thrust of this vast mass movement was twofold: First, it was asserted that '*jata pat puchhe nahin koi; Hari ko bahaje so Hari ka hoi.'*, that is, caste (and community) considerations are irrelevant; whosoever is devoted to God is God's own. And second, it was unanimously declared that neither rituals, nor knowledge (*jñāna)* but sincere selfless devotion (*bhakti)* is the true religion or way to God.

I

In this context, Kabir (fifteenth century) is the greatest saint who rejected all distinctions, not only those of caste, but also those of religion; not only between human beings but also between humans and animals. His conception of true *bhakti* (devotion to one God) was also a

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[5] *Manu Smṛti* VIII. 413, 417 (Buhler, 1982)

[6] Justice was awarded strictly according to the *varṇas* of the perpetrator of crime and the victim thereof, so that a śūdra offender was given capital punishment for a crime for which an 'upper' caste man was let off with minor fines. *Ibid.,* VIII. 314 ff.

[7] Śaṅkara*, Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* I. 34-38 (Gambhirananda, 1965); The text quoted is *Gautam Dharma Sūtra* XII. 4 (Buhler, 1975).

very profound one. But we would here confine ourselves to his rejection or transcendence of all man-made distinctions. Kabir observes how Hindus and Muslims kill each other in the name of their respective gods, and repeatedly declares all of them mad.[8] He laments that no one listens to him, but still persists in telling them the truth which is:

> Brother where did your two gods come from?
>
> Tell me who made you mad ?
>
> Ram, Allah, Keshav, Karim, Hari, Hazarat-
>
> So many names…
>
> For conversation we make two-
>
> This namaz, this puja…
>
> This Mahadev, that Mohammad.
>
> This Hindu that a Turk.[9]

Kabir had the same vision of unity of all creation, especially of all humans, based on the vision of one Divine Being within all souls and within the entire creation, as the Upaniṣadic seers, or as propounded by Śaṅkara on a theoretical level. His vision rejects the assertion of separate gods, and even separate religions for different peoples. His idea is that if the same God creates everything and is within all beings, then just using different names for the self-same Absolute does not make people different. Different ways of worshipping the Divine Being, or different places of worship does not make any difference in that all humans are basically the same; and all are worshipping in their own ways the same God. So he remonstrated both Hindus and Muslims:

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[8] Hess, Singh (1986), p.42.
[9] *Ibid*., pp. 51-52.

> Does Khuda live in a mosque?
>
> Then who lives everywhere?...
>
> Hari in the East, Allah in the West-
>
> So you like to dream…..
>
> It is one, one in every body.
>
> How did you make it two?
>
> Every man and woman born,
>
> They are all your forms, says Kabir.[10]

Significantly, while the Vedantins (monistic philosophers) asserted the basic unity of all creation and human beings on either a theoretical level, or based on their inner mystical experience, Kabir asserted the same truth on two levels – spiritual and rational. There are innumerable verses of Kabir which describe his unitive (mystical) experience, but which we cannot discuss here for want of space. However, Kabir, as we have seen above, brought out the practical implications of his unitive experience which perhaps no Vedantin ever did. We find glimpses of this basic vision of unity of all living beings in some of the Purāṇas, but mostly their assertions are conditional, that is, they say that if a person is truly devoted to God, his caste becomes irrelevant.[11]

But Kabir was different. Not only did he strongly affirm the practical implications of his experience of unity with the 'Divine' as basic unity and equality of all human beings, he did so unconditionally. Kabir asserts the unity of all humans irrespective of whether he/she is a devotee of God or not. He declares that 'All beings are created out of one Glory (*Nūr*). It is

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[10] *Ibid*. (1986), p. 69, 74.
[11] See Sanyal (1973), book 3, chapter 33, vol. 1, p. 279.

difficult to decide who is a Hindu, who a Turk (Muslim).' In another couplet, he declares that since all are born of one Light (*Jyoti*), it is impossible to say who is good, who is bad.[12] One cannot be more unequivocal in the assertion of unconditional equality and basic unity of all human beings.

Even more interesting and significant is Kabir's arguing the same point in a very rational manner. He is continuously berating the false pride of brahmaṇas (priestly caste of Hindus) and mullahs (Muslim priests and law givers) because they know not that essentially all humans are the same. To the brahmaṇas, he says that if you think yourself as very special, how is it that you are not born in some special, opposite manner? To the Qazi (Muslim judge) he says that if your God favors circumcision, why didn't you come out cut? Moreover, if circumcision makes you a Muslim, what would you call your women?[13] The idea here is that basically all human beings are the same, all those distinctions between man and man as Hindus or Muslims, brahmaṇas or śūdras are therefore false. To quote him again:

> No one reads Vedas in the womb.
> No Turk was born circumcised.
> Dropped from the belly at birth,
> a man puts on his costumes,
> and goes through his acts.[14]

Here, Kabir is not asserting the basic unity of all human beings on the basis of some spiritual hypothesis of God's immanence in every heart but on a very rational and scientific basis. His

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[12] Shyamsunder Das (Hindi, 16th edition), pp. 81-82.
[13] *Ibid*., p. 79; Hess, Singh (1986)*, p.69, 79.
[14] Hess, Singh (1986), p. 79.

assertion is very simple and straightforward that shorn of conventional man-made distinctions, basically all human beings are the same. Till recently, even scientists believed in racial differences between man and man. Kabir denied all such distinctions in the fifteenth century, and that too on a practical or scientific basis. Let me quote him again:

> Numskull, you have missed the point.
>
> It is all one skin and bone, one piss and shit,
>
> One blood, one meat…
>
> Who is a brahman, who is a sudra?...
>
> Kabir says plunge into Ram,
>
> There no Hindu, no Turk.[15]

Such a categorical assertion of the unconditional equality and unity of the entire human race was not only not heard of in the Middle Ages, but also not even later till the liberalism of nineteenth century. Kabir was revolted by the Hindu practice of "untouchability". He repeatedly rebuffed the brahmaṇas (priestly class) for their obsession with ritual purity. He told them that there was no escape from touch and we eat, drink and live by touching.[16] Millions are buried under the hut a brahmaṇa lives in; and the blood of innumerable living beings is mixed in the water a *pundit* drinks.[17] Why did Kabir say all these rational things? They have nothing to do with his devotion to Ram (God), or even with his mystical vision of ultimate unity. It seems that Kabir was genuinely irritated by the pretensions of the priests and mullahs, and that irritation was the result of his rational mind.

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[15] *Ibid.* (1986), p. 67.
[16] *Ibid.,* p. 55.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 57-58.

More important, Kabir asserts not only the equality of all human beings but of all living beings. Though the continuity of life from the highest to the lowest has been very well recognized in Hinduism throughout the ages, this has been denied in the Semitic religions. Even science came to accept it only gradually. And here is Kabir who emphatically asserted that continuity or sameness of humans and animals in the Middle Ages. And it was not a matter of faith alone, but of practical scientific reasoning:

> Beast meat and man meat are the same,
> Both have blood that is red sir![18]

Kabir does not stop here but derives a morality of compassion and non-violence from his basic thesis of unity of all living beings. It was also an unconditional condemnation of the rituals of animal sacrifices as he could not understand how God could be satisfied by the killings of animals that are created by Him. So he says:

> For gods and goddesses of clay
> You slaughter living beast, sir!
> If your God is real, why can't he go
> To the field and have his feast, sir![19]

There cannot be a more rational and scientific approach to condemning crude religious practices! And yet Kabir was only a fifteenth century saint whose prime concern was the love of God. I believe that not only Kabir was ahead of his times in the medieval period, but that he would be ahead of his times if he were born now!

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[18] *Ibid.* (1986), pp. 64, 88.
[19] *Ibid.*, p.64, also p. 88.

While some *bhakta* (devotees of God) saints acknowledged but did not emphasize the irrelevance of caste and community distinctions, others like Kabir, Nanak and Raidas emphatically rejected them. Above all most of the *bhakta* saints hailed from the so-called lower classes; and it goes to the credit of Hindu society that they were accepted and venerated by all alike, the elite brahmaṇas and the lowly śūdras. The very popularity of the Bhakti (monotheistic devotion) movement must have undermined the stringency of caste and community distinctions. It could well be asked why the rejection of these distinctions by the *bhakta* saints did not erode the power of these distinctions in Indian society on a permanent basis. There are two reasons for this: First, these *bhakta* (devotee) saints were no social reformers, their main concern being devotion to God in whose love they sang songs. They sincerely believed that every human being had an equal right to be devoted to God, and that in the assembly of the lovers of God there were no distinctions of high or low. But other than expressing this belief (as expressed by the popular couplet, quoted above that there were no distinctions of caste or creed in the love of God), they generally did not disturb the social set-up. It was Kabir alone who did his utmost to disturb the status quo by shouting for the absolute equality of all human beings. If he did not succeed in eradicating or reducing these distinctions, it was possibly because he too was not a social reformer. Second and the more likely reason was that the vested interests of both *pundits* and *maulanas* (Muslim theologians) were for the continuance of these differences because they ensured their respective clientele. The Bhakti movement, with its humanitarian message of basic equality of all living beings, gradually became weaker, and Indian society remained mired in class, caste and community distinctions.

II

Mahatma Gandhi must have found Indian society in the early twentieth century perhaps in a worse stage than it was during late Middle Ages when there worked some spiritualizing influence of the *bhakta* (Hindu devotee) and sufi (Muslim mystic) saints. The mistrust and ill will between Hindus and Muslims had reached new levels; and within Hindu society, the scourge of "untouchability" had become all pervasive and even inhuman. In Tamil Nadu, the "lowest" caste of śūdras was prohibited from walking on the road on which the "upper" caste Hindus walked, lest the shadow of the former pollute the latter. Therefore, the Mahatma declared that the two most important missions of his life were Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of "untouchability", that is, the uplifting of those who were treated so inhumanely until then.

There is a marked similarity between the goals and approaches of Kabir and the Mahatma to the two issues. Basically, both derived their inspiration from their religious faith. For Kabir, it was his vision of one Ram in every heart that made him reject all conventional distinctions. Gandhi also asserted that his religion or faith was the basis and inspiration of all his activities.[20] Like Kabir, Gandhi also believed in the presence of God in every soul; and both called their God Ram, meaning a formless Absolute (*Nirguṇa Brahman*). The second common source of inspiration for both the saints was their natural humaneness. This made Kabir cry at the sight of animal sacrifices and even butchering of animals for eating. The same humaneness made the Mahatma cry during the holocaust accompanying India's independence and partition.

The third similarity between the two was their rational approach to these social and moral issues. We have seen how Kabir argued rationally for the equality of all living beings

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[20] "Every activity of a man of religion must be derived from religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath." *Harijan* 2.3.1934.

on biological grounds. Similarly, Gandhi declared that for him reason is the ultimate test for accepting or rejecting any scripture.[21] Fourth, both lamented that no one listened to them. The refrain of many a song of Kabir is that 'I am shouting but no one listens to me. They have all gone mad.' The talks of Gandhi in the prayer meetings (*prarthana pravachana*), especially during the terrible Hindu-Muslim riots accompanying independence and partition, mainly consist of this lament: 'I am repeatedly telling them (not to kill their brothers), but no one listens to me.' The pathos in his simple Hindi language and the poignancy of his pain are to be felt, and not written down. Kabir did not feel this pain when he talked of Hindus and Muslims taking the name of their respective gods and then killing each other because he could be angry at those fools. But anger was not in the nature of Gandhi. Above all, he was facing a situation of mutual massacre by Hindus and Muslims which was unprecedented in the history of India. Gandhi could only appeal and cry.

Both Kabir and Mahatma Gandhi ultimately failed in their respective missions – Kabir in making men realize that the external forms of religion are futile, the real religion consists in trying to find the God in your own heart and in all living beings around you; and Gandhi in bringing about harmony between various, mainly two, warring communities, and driving home his message of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and compassion for all.

However, there are basic differences also between the approaches of the two towards the same issues. Gandhi, as against Kabir, was first and foremost a social reformer who was faced with the task of nation building, and wanted to bring about inter-community harmony because he wanted India's freedom, and he rightly believed that neither India's freedom, nor her survival as a nation would be possible if she remained divided among various mutually

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[21] "I decline to be bound by any interpretation if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense." Gandhi, (2001), p. 10, also pp. 20 ff. Also see Gandhi (1987), pp. 12, 31, 104.

antagonist religious groups. Unlike Kabir, the Mahatma did not always assert the fundamental unity of all human beings, but merely said that religious, cultural or linguistic plurality, or any other differences do not destroy the claim of a society to be a nation.[22] Gandhi, in spite of his sobriquet of Mahatma, was first and foremost a social reformer who could not carry out his mission without acknowledging the practical reality. And that, as perceived by him, was the acute consciousness of separate identity of the two major religious communities – Hindus and Muslims.

Mahatma, being committed to social reform, or rather social transformation, accepted the facts as they were. That is why, while for Kabir, there was no basic difference between Hindus and Muslims, Gandhi always talked as if they formed two basic communities, each having a separate, independent existence of its own, and the goal of communal harmony meant a prior acceptance of this fact, and working from there. He mostly talked in terms of 'we' Hindus and 'they' Mussalmans (Hindi for Muslims). His personal pronoun was reserved for Hinduism/ Hindus. 'My Hinduism tells me;' or 'We Hindus must treat our Muslim brothers in a loving, forgiving manner.' He asked Hindus to make all sacrifices to meet the demands of their 'younger brothers'. But they were different from Hindus with whom Hindus had occasional quarrels, but towards whom they should be tolerant and forgiving.[23]

I personally believe that no single dimension of human life can be made the sole criterion to divide human beings into separate compartments, mistakenly called communities

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[22] "*Swaraj* for India must be an impossible dream without an indissoluble union between the Hindus and Muslims of India. It must not be a mere truce. It cannot be based upon mutual fear. It must be partnership between equals, each respecting the religion of the other." *Young India* 6. 10. 1920.

[23] See Gandhi (2001), pp. 49 ff. and 55 ff. Gandhi therein acknowledges basic temperamental and normative differences between Hindus and Muslims. Also, "Lastly, if it be true that the Hindus believe in the doctrine of non-killing and the Mohammadens do not, what, pray, is the duty of the former?.." Gandhi (1938, reprint 2001), p. 45. This is, however, too strong a statement sprojecting a picture of Muslims as aggressors, and is not typical of Gandhi.

in India.[24] However, the Mahatma was more realistic, and in real life we simply cannot deny the existence of vast differences between human beings on the basis of religion, caste and a few other factors. Perhaps Gandhi's desire to bring about the Hindu-Muslim unity was so strong that he felt that undermining their mutual basic differences would antagonize them, and that would make his mission all the more difficult to achieve. The Mahatma's uniting the Khilafat movement (in support of the reinstating of the Caliph as the head of Turkey after the first World War) and the first Non-cooperation movement aimed at India's freedom was one such attempt which emphasized not the commonality between Hindus and Muslims as Indians, but the separate identity of Indian Muslims. Of course, as a result of this combination, there was unprecedented unity and harmony among the followers of two religions during the short space of two years. But the entire approach was flawed. It seemed to have accepted as a given fact that Indian Muslims could not be aroused to fight the British for India's freedom, suggesting that Indian Muslims were Muslim first and Indian afterwards; and that they were closer to the world *umma* (universal society) of Muslims than to their Hindu neighbors. This is a wrong conceptualization of India's reality. And why should a religious movement of a limited community be combined with a secular, all inclusive movement for national freedom? The marriage of the Khilafat movement with the secular movement for India's freedom brought *ulamas* and *maulanas* (Muslim theologians and clergy) to the center stage, thus strengthening the separate identity of Muslims.[25] The Communal Award of 1932 allotted separate seats to every religious community – Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, etc; it also allotted separate seats to the "Depressed classes" or the Scheduled castes of today. While Gandhi accepted the principle of separate electorates for different religious communities, though unwillingly, he revolted against the allocation of separate seats

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[24] See Jhingran (1995), pp. 132 ff., 208 ff., 264 ff.
[25] See Hamza Alvi, in Hasan, ed,. (1998), pp. 25 ff. Also see .B. R. Nanda (1989), pp. 198 ff.

to the "Depressed classes". This goes to prove that somehow for Gandhi, religious differences were paramount, determining the identity of a person or a group permanently. Of course, he also affirmed that all Hindus, Muslims and others were equally Indian, and there was no basic difference between them.[26] If it had not been so, so many Muslim leaders, as Maulana Azad, Badruddin Taiyyabji, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M.A Ansari et al., would not have been some of the greatest leaders of India's struggle for independence.

It is true that the way of Kabir, sweepingly rejecting all these differences, is not either true to ground realities, or conducive to a permanent state of social harmony. Human beings would never accept to be submerged in some vague unity based on some mystical experience of ultimate unity. Individuality and separate identities are craved not only by groups, but also by individuals. Therefore, the Mahatma was right when he boldly accepted the differences between Hindus and Muslims. But he was also wrong on two counts: First, he made these differences as almost basic, often speaking as if Hindu and Muslim communities were separate units existing independently of each other in one geographical unit, that is, India. Secondly, he submerged the individuals into their communal units, that is, he took it for granted that all Muslims and all Hindus were alike and thought and acted in the same way.

Perhaps Kabir was wrong in sweepingly rejecting all differences, and Gandhi was right in frankly recognizing them. But if differences between man and man are a fact, so is the basic affinity between all human beings. As Kabir said, we are all made up of the same stuff; and we are born and die in a similar way. When confronted by some tragedy, or some ailment we suffer and react to it in the same way. Within a society or nation, even our reactions to external events, or our socio-moral norms are very similar, if not identical.

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[26] Gandhi (1938, 2001), pp. 43-44.

Though recognizing the differences between religion-based communities, the Mahatma's conviction of the basic unity of all religions is the same as that of Kabir:

> Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? Wherein is the cause for quarreling?[27]

Herein also, there is a subtle difference between the approaches of the two saints. Kabir seems to be rejecting all formal religions as useless in realizing God who can be found only by selfless devotion and looking inwards for His presence. Gandhi, instead, is accepting of all religions per se. While Kabir condemned all and everybody like a Biblical prophet, condemnation was not the way of the Mahatma. Here, Gandhi was truer to his ideal of non-violence than Kabir. Mahatma's conviction, regarding the basic unity of all religions, in as much as they are all human efforts to realize the self-same Reality, was both intensely sincere and foundational to all his views and actions. This typically Indian faith is passionately countered both by the followers of Semitic religions and Western philosophers of religion. The former asserts that not all religions but their own religion is the final revelation of God. The latter argue that each culture and religion has its own conceptual framework which moulds it into a unique whole, and any talk of their basic unity falsifies their respective ethos.[28] However, Indians have always believed in the ideal of '*Ekam Sat, vipr*ā *bahudh*ā *vadanti*' (the Truth is one though sages or religions speak of it differently) from the time of the Vedas. Gandhi presented this ideal in a very rational manner:

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[28] "We are confronted by religions […] Each religion is an organism, and has to be understood in terms of the interrelation of its different parts.[…] each religion must also be seen essentially in its own terms, from within, as it were." Ninian Smart, (1974), pp. 31-32. Most other western philosophers of religion, as R.C. Zaehner, emphasize the mutual differences even more.

> If we are imperfect ourselves, religions as conceived by us must also be
>
> imperfect. We have not realized religion in its perfection, even as we have not
>
> realized God [….]
>
> Religion of our conception, being thus imperfect, is always subject to a process
>
> of evolution and interpretation.[….] And if all faiths outlined by men are imperfect,
>
> the question of comparative merit does not arise.
>
> The one religion is beyond speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as
>
> they can command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally
>
> imperfect. Whose interpretation is to be held to be true?[29]

The above is the most rational assertion ever possible of the fact that no religion, as it is conceived and practiced in a concrete form, can be the final and absolute "revelation" of God, and that the human element even in "revelation" cannot be avoided. The Mahatma's assertion of the possible imperfections in all religions because of the mediation of human mind and language is not only true but is also the best way to ensure communal harmony. Kabir saw the imperfections of religions as understood and practiced by men and condemned those (concrete) religions loudly. Mahatma saw those imperfections, and rationally and quietly pointed out the possibility of imperfections in all religions. He went beyond both Kabir and the modern secularists/postmodernists by insisting that if every one of us realizes the possibility of imperfections in his/her own religion, it stands to reason that we should feel not only tolerant towards other religions, but also respect them as human efforts like our own, to understand the mystery of the "Divine" and the creation. According to him, tolerance implies "a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one's own," whereas his way of

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[29] *Gandhi Reader for 1988*, pp. 34-35.

ahimsa "teaches us to entertain the same respect to the religious faiths of others as we accord to our own, thus admitting the imperfection of the latter."[30]

He concluded that all religions are true; all religions have some error in them; and all religions are almost as dear to him as his Hinduism.[31] Kabir was convinced of the truth of one Ram or the Absolute residing in every heart, and that seeking him anywhere else is futile. And from the height of his mystical vision he condemned all who sought him in Kaba or Kailash. Gandhi started with the ideal that he or his religion is not the sole possessor of truth, so he sought to condemn no one. In fact, his message of religious toleration as admitting the imperfections of one's own faith and then respecting other faiths as similar efforts by humankind to penetrate the ultimate mystery provides the panacea for the ills of religious or cultural domination of others by those who are convinced of the finality of the version of the ultimate truth affirmed in their religion or culture. It also leaves no scope for mutual ill will and violence in the name of religion. As he said:

> The need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the
>
> devotees of different religions. We want to reach not the dead end but unity in
>
> diversity.[….] The soul of religion is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms.
>
> The latter will persist to the end of time.[32]

He repeatedly asserted that, 'Truth is the exclusive property of no single scripture.'[33] This single assertion at once corrects the fanaticism of Semitic religions, and anticipates the emphasis on religious and cultural diversity or pluralism of post-modernism. Mahatma's acceptance of the uniqueness of and differences between religions, combined with his

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[30] *Ibid.*(1988), p. 34.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[32] *Young India* 25. 9.1924.
[33] *Ibid.*

message of religious toleration as respect and charity, aim at eradicating the very roots of inter-community frictions, and creating an atmosphere of total harmony between different religious communities. His approach has the double merit of creating harmony without undermining the differences or what is called uniqueness of various religions.

The way to inter-religious harmony is through an attitude of charity which implies a preparedness 'to understand, appreciate and make allowances for the other's viewpoint and even weakness.' It also means a willingness to 'do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.'[34]

The fact is that not only the followers of different religions reject the profound truth of Mahatma's message of religious tolerance as mutual love, respect and charity, Western philosophers of religion just do not acknowledge any such profound approach, convinced as they are of the uniqueness of different religions, and implicitly the final truth of Christianity. The Mahatma's twin theses of acknowledging that one's religion is not perfect and final, and then wholeheartedly accepting and respecting other religions and their followers as fellow pilgrims are the best way to ensure inter-religious harmony and cooperation, so far rarely attempted by anyone in the West or the East. Perhaps it is a better way to realize the above goals than Kabir's outright condemnation of all concrete religions.

Bipan Chandra has argued that the Mahatma's views regarding the role of religion in public life changed drastically with the passage of time. In later years, he advocated that politics and state should be above religion, and that religion is a personal matter.[35] As far as I understand, the two views – that religion should inspire and inform all human activities, including politics; and that religion is a personal matter and must not intrude in public life – were present in Gandhi's thought since the beginning and he continued to hold them till the

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[34] *Young India* June 12, 1924.
[35] See Bipan Chandra, (2004), pp. 3 ff.

end. He reasonably argued that human life cannot be divided into airtight compartments, and man's faith and his activities form an integrated whole.[36] What is more, it is desirable that religion, being a moralizing and spiritualizing force, must inform all our motives and activities.[37] The problem came when he gave divergent definitions of religion. He used to give very concrete definitions of Hinduism at first which emphasized *varṇāśrama dharma* and cow protection, and even glamorized Hinduism.[38] If someone's views and activities are determined by one's concrete religion, and assuming that others would likewise be inspired by their own concrete religions, differences and conflicts between them would be natural in a plural society. However, he also explained religion as belief in the moral government of the world, or simply as faith in God.[39] He generally expressed his opinion according to the context. In the late 1940s when faced by intense communal violence leading to the final communal holocaust, his views in the matter of the role of religion in public life did change. Now he positively stated that religion is a 'personal matter', or that it is a relation between a man and his Maker.[40]

The second dearest cause to the Mahatma was the eradication of the practice of "untouchability" from the Hindu society. The Mahatma undertook a fast unto death (in September 1932) at the announcement of the communal award which recognized the untouchables as a minority independent of the Hindu fold. While he accepted separate electorates for different religious communities, he was not ready to accept that untouchables

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[36] "I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into watertight compartments, called social, political, religious. All act and react upon each other." *Young India* 2.3.1922. "Every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion." *Harijan* 2.3.1934. "One's everyday life is never capable of being separated from one's spiritual being. Both act and react upon one another." *Harijan* 30.3. 1947.

[37] "Yes, I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions." *Harijan*, 10. 2. 1940.

[38] See "Why I am a Hindu" and "Aspects of Hinduism" as given in Gandhi (2001), pp. 7-8; 9-16.

[39] "Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in the ordered government of the universe." *Harijan*, 10. 2. 1940. "By religion I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker." As given in Prabhu, Rao (1987), p.64.

[40] "Religion is not a test of nationality, but a personal matter between man and his God." *Harijan* 26.6.1947; See also Chandra (2004), pp. 4 ff. for detailed quotes to this effect.

(the *Dalits* in today's parlance) be recognized as a separate community, and be derecognized as Hindus. He discontinued his fast only when a common resolution was passed by various parties that they would jointly work for the eradication of "untouchability".[41] He undertook a 21 days fast again (in May 1933) for the cause of removal of "untouchability" when he found that the practice was in no way showing any sign of diminishing. All his life he fought for the removal of "untouchability" from Hindu society and a better treatment of the so-called untouchables/ *antyajas*/ *Harijans* (the lowermost caste of Hindus). He repeatedly declared the practice of "untouchability" a scourge of Hindu society, and told:

> This practice of regarding the *antyajas* as untouchables is intolerable to me.
> Hindus owe it as a duty to make a determined effort to purify Hinduism and
> eradicate this practice of untouchability. I have said to the Hindus and say it again
> today that till Hindu society is purged of this sin, swaraja [independence] is
> an impossibility.[42]

However, the Mahatma's treatment of *varṇa*/caste distinctions and hierarchy in Hindu society is rather unsatisfactory. He started by declaring that the *varṇāśrama dharma* system is both an integral part of Hinduism and is also a very rational and moral arrangement, not to be questioned. Here, even though he uses the full term *varṇāśrama dharma*, he is meaning only the *varṇa* system that decides the profession of a person exclusively based on one's chance birth in a particular family. Gandhi insisted that a person must follow the profession that is

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[41] The Resolution is quoted in Baren Ray (1996), p. 5. In my account of Gandhi's efforts for the eradication of "untouchability" I am indebted to his version.
[42] Gandhi (2001), p. 94, also *ibid.*, pp. 61, 73, etc.

allotted to him by his birth, a brahmaṇa (priestly class) should do teaching of scriptures, and a śūdra (lowermost class or caste) should do menial work.[43]

If so, then, his readers asked repeatedly, how was it that he, a bania (a middle caste) was not doing business, but was instead engaged in the work of teaching dharma to others or leading a mass movement. Gandhi had no satisfactory reply to this query, but simply said that even if he was following another dharma, he still remained a bania. Even more striking was his assertion that people belonging to different *varṇas* should not only not intermarry, but need also not interdine! His justification was equally irrational. To quote:

 I cannot tell a Hindu-- for I do not believe in it-- that he may freely eat and drink in the company of any other Hindus or that all Hindus should freely intermarry. This is not necessary.[….] I believe that it is with a view to self-control that people refrain from them.[44]

After emphatically asserting that one should follow the profession of one's *varṇa* and must not try to change his profession even if it is materially more satisfying (he did not accept the possibility of a more meaningful profession which suits one's inclinations and aspirations), Gandhi repeatedly declared that there is no distinction of high or low in the law of *varṇa* and the compulsory rule of following the hereditary profession:

 If we are children of the same God how can there be rank among us:…. The law of

 Varna is one of absolute equality among all the creatures of God… The verses in

 the Smritis about the *shudras* need to be summarily rejected as being contrary to

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[43] "But I do regard *Varnashrama* as a healthy division of work based on birth." *Ibid*., p. 64; also see *ibid*., pp. 57, 82, 88, etc.. "The law of *Varna* teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties. It also follows that there is no calling too low or too high." Gandhi (1987), p. 12.
[44] Gandhi (2001), pp. 96-7, 104-5.

the spirit of humanity.[45]

However the fact remains that the hierarchy of *varṇas* is an integral part of the *varṇa* system. Though he did not admit it, the *varṇa* system necessarily determines the status of that particular *varṇa* or profession in the overall hierarchy of *varṇas*. The two – the determination of one's profession and that of one's status in the hierarchy of *varṇas* by the accident of birth – are two sides of the same coin. Gandhi wanted to stick to the *varṇa* system and yet asserted that it has no connotation of higher or lower.

Having defended hereditary *varṇas*, the Mahatma was emphatically against the practice of "untouchability", which is an offshoot of the same system. He dissociated the practice of "untouchability" from his defense of the *varṇa* system. 'I find no place for untouchability', said he, 'in the law of *varṇa* or otherwise in Hinduism.' He added that they (untouchables) should be included in the śūdras. He contended that while the law of hereditary *varṇas* is both integral to Hinduism and a rational approach to social organization, the practice of "untouchability" is not so.[46] Thus, even though the Mahatma abhorred and was intensely pained by the practice of "untouchability", he stopped short of a rational humane approach like that of Kabir of summarily rejecting all man-made distinctions which would have cut the very roots of "untouchability"; and therefore his stand on the eradication of "untouchability" remains a half-way measure like his views on the *varṇa* hierarchy.

He contended that the *bhangis* (sweepers) who were entrusted with the task of manually cleaning the dry latrines must continue in their work because it was determined by their heredity, even if they were capable of higher things, that is, mental work, or arts and crafts. He never suggested that some other type of latrines could be substituted which would

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[45] *Gandhi* (1987), p. 125. also *ibid.*, pp. 12, 32.
[46] Gandhi (2001), pp. 61, 65, 73, 88; Gandhi (1987*)*, p. 12.

free the sweepers from their demeaning and inhuman task. He just kept on saying that it was their work, and they must not shun their allotted duty. Instead, he advised them to remain clean, not to partake of unhealthy food, and request their 'masters' to increase their payment. While asking the caste Hindus not to follow the practice of "untouchability", the Mahatma asked the sweepers to put up with their lot with patience.[47]

So he opined that the fault does not lie in the *varṇāśrama dharma*, or in recognizing the law of heredity and transmission of qualities from generation to generation, but with the faulty conception of inequality.[48] Unfortunately, the Mahatma failed to understand that the practice of "untouchability" is an integral part of *varṇāśrama dharma*. Suppose a man/woman does not do the inhuman work of cleaning latrines, as is mostly the case now, even then he/she would be understood as an untouchable by caste Hindus, simply because he/she is born in a family or community of untouchables.

He was faced with the charge of being inconsistent. He, the Mahatma, of course, did not make any distinctions between man and man; stayed in *Harijan* (lower caste) *bastis* (colonies), partook his meals with them and with his other Muslim friends. Even an inter-community marriage was solemnized in his *ashrama* (hermitage). There, 'lower' caste persons were treated not only equally, but also dined with others. And each single member of the *ashrama* had to take turn in cleaning the latrines, irrespective of his *varṇa* (caste). He never gave a rational answer to these anomalies in his views and practices regarding caste-based divisions in Hindu society. He supported the *varṇa* system which allocated compulsory professions to people born in different *varṇas* from which there was no escape. And yet he

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[47] Gandhi (2001), 95, 99, 106-7.

[48] "'The scavengers' children may remain scavengers without feeling degraded and they will be no more considered untouchable than brahmins. The fault does not therefore lie in recognizing the law of heredity and transmission of qualities from generation to generation, but lies in the faulty conception of inequality." *Ibid.,* (2001), p.82.

adopted a dharma or profession which was not that of his *varṇa* as a bania (merchant class/caste). If he could take freedom in his case, why did he not allow that freedom to others? If it was right for him to eat and stay with the 'lowest born', it must be right for all humans. It is the first principle of morality that what is right for one person in certain circumstances is right for all others in similar circumstances.[49] In other words, if treating other human beings as unconditionally equal is a virtue for Gandhi, it must be a virtue for all others.

Mahatma was strongly influenced and conditioned by the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgīta* and that made him support the *varṇaśrama dharma* as mandatory to all, and oppose inter-caste marriages. He failed to apply his own criterion of rationality and changing values with time to the teachings of the *Gīta*. Of course, he was consistently inconsistent! While he clearly asserted earlier that he was rather not in favor of the practice of inter-dining and inter-marriage, he later sometimes accepted these practices, saying that the two practices are neither a part of the movement for the eradication of "untouchability"; nor should anybody be prevented from undertaking them.[50] The same was true about the issue of temple entry of the untouchables. Earlier, he seemed hesitant in an all out support for the right to temple entry, as he thought that it should be left to the sects or groups to which the temples belonged. Later on, he favored this right more strongly. Baren Ray avers that there was considerable change in the Mahatma's views concerning the *varṇa* system and the practice of "untouchability", and from 1930 onwards, he became more acutely conscious of the evils of this practice.[51]

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[49] This principle is well recognized in western thought from I. Kant to R.M. Hare and M.G. Singer et al. For a detailed discussion of the same see Jhingran (2001), pp. 201 ff., 293 ff.
[50] Gandhi's statement of 1937, quoted by Baren Ray (1996), p.33.
[51] See Baren Ray, *op. cit.*, 'Introduction', pp. 19 ff.

Hereafter he declared that he was in favor of "the most drastic legislation rendering criminal all the special persecution to which these fellow countrymen of mine are subjected by the so-called superior classes."[52] He added that, "It would be far better that *Harijans* should fight *Savarna* (upper caste) Hindus than they should forever remain wretched slaves and dependent on *Savarna* Hindus, living on their goodwill and eating their leftovers."[53] This is in contrast to his earlier advice to the sweepers to do their allotted work, while trying to remain clean and healthy. However, he still did not come out strongly enough against the hereditary *varṇa* system. He kept on declaring that there was no place for the conceptions of superiority or inferiority in the *varṇa* system. But this is not true; the idea of hierarchy is integral to *varṇa* system.

Kabir, on the other hand, did not concern himself with the specific social issues; yet his assertion of the fundamental equality and unity of all human beings by declaring the illegitimacy of caste and creed differences, was both rational and gave a firm foundation to a humanistic morality. The Mahatma had the same vision of the Divine in the hearts of all living beings as Kabir; there is a difference though in the understanding of the same vision by the two saints. While for Kabir the vision was the outpouring of his unitive vision, for the Mahatma it was the expression of his intense concern for the 'dumb millions'. His entire life and all his sayings were determined by this one concern of him. He repeatedly asserted that

> I recognize no God except that God that is to be found in the hearts of dumb
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> millions. They do not recognize His presence, I do.[…] And I worship that
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> God.[…] through the service of these millions.[54]

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[52] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 30.
[53] Quoted in *ibid.*, p.31.
[54] *Harijan* 11.3. 1939.

And,

> Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God.[…..] The immediate service of all
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> human beings becomes a necessary part of this endeavor simply because the only
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> way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by
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> the service of all.[55]

Kabir's vision of the essential unity of all human beings can provide an idealistic foundation
to all our efforts at both the resolution of mutual conflicts and providing dignity to the
downtrodden. But the Gandhi's interpretation of the same vision gives us two messages
which can prove to be direct means of realizing the above goals. They are: sincere religious
toleration of and respect for other faiths on the basis of a frank acknowledgement of the
possible faults of our own religion; and the need to see the "Divine" in the hearts of the
'dumb millions' which must lead us to the service of those millions as the only way to realize
the "Divine" in our hearts.

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[55] *Harijan* 29.8. 1936

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(Re)locating Northern Modernity:
Lines of Tension of the Network Society Model,
Looking at *Possible Modernities*

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The paper starts from the need of giving a more precise time-spaced collocation to the conceiving of modernity. A definition of modernity as a result of an interpretative space – produced by tensions between the ideal of individual autonomy and the objectives of full intelligibility and rationalization of the world – is discussed. The model of the network society is then analyzed as one of the current Western dominant frameworks of that interpretative space. On the one hand, it seems to provide the most effective vocabulary for understanding crucial social processes of the modern corporation and, more in general, of the "new spirit of capitalism". Moreover, the network organizational model is usually presented

31

as more democratic and open, as compared to the traditional modern hierarchical devices. Organising via vertical devices – institutions, political representative systems, etc. – has to leave space to the self-organising, horizontal society via networks. But, on the other hand, the paper points out as well the fields of tension and the paradoxical contradictions – mainly concerning a crucial pillar of the Western definition of modernity: the process of individualization – internal to that model.

In the third part of the paper, some promising directions of social theory are explored. The possibilities of combining sociology and critique, by abandoning the traditional monological intellectual architecture of the "Northern" or "metropolitan social theory" and producing a more inclusive and open social theory of modernity, are discussed, looking for possible alternative frameworks for modernity as interpretative space.

Where Are We Speaking From?

Reflecting on (theories, concepts, interpretive schemes, definitions, vocabularies, practices, etc. of) modernity seems to be a good exercise for a social sciences' scholar (and not only for him/her, probably): this has been my thought sometime after beginning the work for the present paper. Different from other possible fields of inquiring, these themes constrain to take into consideration not only objectives, aims and directions of one's own thought. Perhaps due to the transversal nature of any deepening of that subject – modernity goes across issues of political theory and practice, issues of economy and society, of space and time and so on – it pushes not only to work over the possible conclusions of one's own intellectual efforts, but also over one's own point of departure (and the implications that starting point has on the possible points of arrival). As such, in addition to "what I'm trying to say?" is the question "who is speaking when I am speaking?" In other words, how do the specificities of my social, cultural, political, historical (and many other) belongings pre-structure my possible treatment

32

of such a general issue (modernity theory) and condition my possible conclusions? In case I want to avoid banal, dominant and greatly pre-given conclusions, how much do I have to revise my professional instruments and perspectives? The reflexive implications of this inquiring path were not so evident to me at the beginning of the work and had become more and more pressing going deeper into the arguments.

In a way, borrowing from the field of organisational studies, we can say that modernity – as a theoretical object – is a terrain of sensemaking (Weick, 1995), that is, a process of (socially) enacting a reality on which we are going to act. In this paper, I will try to raise some points on what I consider to be (one of the) dominant ways of structuring that process, always trying at the same time to look at the borders of that process and to consider possible alternatives to it.

Modernity as a Process of Sensemaking

We can observe the conceiving of modernity as a self-representational move. As it has been said concerning the working of social organizations (Weick, 1979), "the map is the territory". Modes of defining, assuming and contesting modernity are (directly or indirectly) the framing maps of the territory of social action. This rather simple statement implies a great, often unspoken, responsibility for social sciences, with regard to the maps they produce and circulate. Without falling into any determinism and always recognizing a clear hierarchy of responsibility (some social sciences are much more influential than other; more in general, many other social actors are more influential than social scientists), these maps bring along vocabularies, narratives, schemes of evaluation, cognitive frameworks, emotional elements, etc.: they contribute to the complex and fundamental social process of generating and reproducing (or transforming) current regimes of justification and models of individual engagement. This process does not happen in an empty space: it must be always considered

33

the different "extra-cognitive" strength characterizing different theories and approaches – some points of view are much more strongly represented and equipped than other ones as far as resources, institutions, official recognition, funds of research are concerned (Cassano, 2009a: 49; 2009b). Right here emerges the relationship I have been introducing already at the beginning of the paper: between the subject we choose to deepen and the need for a reflexive inquiry of our taken-for-granted setting and premises about that subject (and the legitimate way of approaching it). To put it in Connell's (2006: 237) words, "the professional organization of sociology is not the root of the problem. Vast international inequalities of resources, especially in the size and wealth of higher education systems, shape all academic disciplines. But global inequalities may also be embedded *within* a discipline, in the way intellectual workers define their problems and carry out their work".

More precisely, I am talking of reflexivity as the exercise of building knowledge in a continuing relationship with some *publics*, assuming the correspondent responsibility for the categories, concepts, and perspectives of observation such an exercise implies. In the discussion about self-representation models our modernity produces, I think it is important not only to consider the risks of ethnocentrism linked to these models, but also the potentialities of regenerations growing up at their (epistemological, geographical, social, etc.) margins. In this sense, a first step contributing to a *public sociology*, aiming at "taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private troubles, and thus regenerating sociology's moral fiber" (Burawoy, 2005: 3), consists in continuing to keep open two questions: not only "what I am trying to say?", but also "who is speaking when I am speaking?". These two questions can offer, indeed, an alternative access to the questions that according to Burawoy (2005: 10) place the different sociologies currently working in relation to each other: "sociology for whom?" and "sociology for what?"

Locating Our Modernity: A Tentative Scheme

Peter Wagner (2009), after having denounced the many distortions and perils coming from timeless and spaceless generalizations of a specifically (firstly European and then Western) conceiving of modernity, advances a helpful scheme for the reasoning here developed, summarising a variety of (space-temporally specific) possible ways of conceptualizing modernity in four perspectives. The first one defines modernity *as an era and as a set of institutions*: according to this perspective, a society can be said to be modern when a "full set of functionally differentiated institutions" (Wagner, 2009: 250) is achieved. Only a strict minority of countries completely matched these prerequisites at the time they were formulated, but that conception was from the beginning correlated to an evolutionary conception of the steps each nation had to do in order to realize a modern society (Martinelli, 1998). Leaving behind its more ideological aspects, resulting from an idealization and arbitrary generalization of the post-Second World War United States social reality, we can say, along with Wagner (2009: 250-1), that the conceptual framework of this perspective is based on a combination of "an emphasis on free human action with the achievement of greater mastery over the natural and social world" and that the differentiation of functions is what makes that combination concretely possible. In this sense, it is a perspective that can be interpreted as a "sociologized version of Enlightenment combination of freedom and reason".

Directly contrasting this first definition – but, it has to be stressed, without abandoning the commitment to modernity – a second perspective emerged, what Wagner (2009: 251) identifies as "the *grand critiques of modernity*". From very different points of view and approaches (Marx, Weber, Michels, Frankfurt School, etc.), many critical interpretations of the above introduced perspective on modernization (as an era and as a set of institutions) pointed out the contradictions between the ideal modern project as a project of

individual self-realization and the "overarching structures, such as capitalism and the market, organization and bureaucracy, and modern philosophy and science" produced by the development of modernity conceived as 'liberal society' (ibidem). The more modernity is concretely realized, the more its ideal project cannot be effectively pursued.

As I have already said, it has to be emphasized that, despite the evident contrast characterizing these two perspectives, they share the fundamental (historical and epistemological) assumption that "there is one single form of modernity, emerging in Europe and showing the tendency to transcend time and space" (Wagner, 2009: 252). Only more recent conceptualizations of modernity have introduced elements for mining that assumption. A third perspective, for instance, reinterprets the couple autonomy-mastery in a different way, shifting away from the emphasis on institutions to the emphasis on *interpretations*. Based on the theory of the double "imaginary signification" (Cornelius Castoriadis), it focuses on the *interpretative space* produced by the ambivalences of the two components themselves – "the idea of the autonomy of the human being as knowing and acting subject" and "the idea of the rationality of the world, i.e. its principled intelligibility" – and by the tensions between them. The turning point here is that this conception opens to a variety of signification and institutional forms: "The relation between autonomy and mastery institutes an interpretative space that is to be specifically filled up in each socio-historic situation through struggles over the situation-grounded appropriate meaning" (Wagner, 2009: 252-3).

The fourth perspective is directly linked to the recent developments already expressed in the third one. The latter, contrary from the approaches stressing aspects related to rationalization, functional logics (or to the perverse effects of these aspects, such as alienation), has indeed focused on the issues of individual autonomy. This shift of attention permitted a further development towards a perspective in which, especially in literature and

arts, the *experience of modernity* is emphasized. Individuality and individualization come into the first stage, in a different way from their rational and atomistic versions centered on the strategic ability in maximizing their utility. Here the 'culture of modernity' is said to be concerned primarily of the self-exploring and self-expressing aims as fundamental dimensions of individuality (Taylor, 1992)[56].

It is in the context of the two more recent perspectives, the linear evolutionist logics of modernity conceiving and the rigid dichotomy between modernity and tradition – as well as between rational and cultural, universal and particular – that have been profoundly discussed and criticized. At the same time, it should be considered that the role of the critiques and the elaborations about modernity coming 'from the borders', from spaces outside what has been self-defined as the centre and the origin of modernity itself (not only the South and not only post-colonial studies), but I will return to this point later. For the aims of my discussion, we can temporarily stop our review here of some main perspectives about the meaning of modernity. But I would stress again two warnings that can be relevant for any further development of reflection. On the one hand, it is probably true what Wagner (2009: 254) affirms about our current position in regard to the perspectives I myself recalled: "while we cannot entirely do without the former two approaches, the institutional and the critical one, a significant potential to further develop the thinking about modernity lies today with the latter two, the interpretative and the experiential one", as these two perspectives determine

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[56] It should be also recalled that Charles Taylor (1992) associates modernity not only to the relevance of the autonomy of human being, but also the dimension of the public sphere: "[T]he public sphere is not only a ubiquitous feature of any modern society; it also plays a crucial role in its self-justification as a free self-governing society, that is, as a society in which (a) people form their opinions freely, both as individuals and in coming to a common mind, and (b) these common opinions matter: they in some way take effect on or control government (Taylor, 1992: 221; for contemporary developments about issues of public sphere, see also http://publicsphere.ssrc.org/). This again shows us in which way, as Wagner (2009: 253) wrote as well, that conceiving the individualisation process in these terms is "equally alien to the functionalist praise of modern society as to the totalizing critiques of modernity, but is even quite distant from the more formalized 'modern' discourses of the individual as in rational choice theory or in liberal political philosophy".

the intellectual conditions for understanding a variety of different conceptions of modernity

and the process through which given conceptions prevail in given phases. On the other hand,

it is clear that the "multiple modernities" vision (particularly in its more historicist and

culturalist version), as one of the most probable result of the enlargement of intellectual

landscape produced by that development of the (latter two) perspectives, hides at least some

very critical points. It is indeed largely recognized that definitions of modernity "has to start

from a non-Eurocentric definition of modernity" (Therborn, 2003: 294) and that

ethnocentrism in general, even when coming from very authoritative sources, has to be

avoided.[57] But what should be avoided as well is the translation of the "multiple modernities"

perspective in mere culturalist terms, dehistoricizing and desocializing the idea of culture,

assuming culture as a homogeneous notion (often conflated with nation-states) and denying

its internal socio-political conflicts (in which cultures themselves are involved) that

contribute to social and cultural dynamism (Dirlic, 2003).[58]

Therefore, the framework avoids (i) any mistaken conflation between modernity and

capitalism (that has emerged during some moments in sociological debates[59]) as well as (ii)

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[57] Therborn (2003) criticizes in particular Giddens' definition of modernity: "'modernity' refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence" (Giddens, 1990: 1) – but for other similar cases (Coleman, Bourdieu) see Connell, 2006.

[58] Quoting directly Dirlic's (2003: 288) conclusions about it, "An idea such as 'multiple modernities' needs to be viewed within this context of power. Regardless of the intentions of the scholars who propound those ideas (who represent a broad political range), there is good reason to question ideas of 'multiple' or 'alternative' modernities as expressions of an improved, genuinely democratic approach to global modernity; rather than simply a new mode of managing conflict by containing it when Eurocentric notions of modernity have lost their hegemony (but not their dominance)". In these terms, modernity is always to be conceived as "a problem globally; not just an East–West or a North–South problem, but a problem within individual societies" (ibidem), and so is always to be studied and discussed in terms of *relationships*.

[59] During the late 1980s, social theory has been going exactly in the direction of conflating modernity and capitalism. While giving to the debate a common ground for representing the present social landscape and shifting the attention toward different specifications of such a shared definition ("reflexive modernity", "second modernity", "high modernity", etc.), it was often assumed that the common ground has to imply a dismissal of any possibility of critique of capitalism: "traditionally, critique used to embrace modernity (…) and to denounce capitalism because of its inability to complete the project of modernity – or rather: because of the obstacles it posed to such completion. To use the term 'modernity' for a contemporary reality that was without doubt capitalist as well, made such a conceptual strategy impossible" (Wagner, 2001: 2).

any disguising conception of modernity as an already given, fixed and self-evident project. I will go deeper into the second aspect later in the paper. As far as the first point is concerned, according to the way of thinking I am trying to advance here, capitalism is not to be naturalized nor identified with modernity: it has to be considered as a term referring "to a situation, self-created by human beings committed to the modern ideas of autonomy and mastery, in which a certain interpretation of these ideas prevails over others" (Wagner, 2001: 24). As such, our following question should be: what is the current, situated, dominant mode of structuring that "interpretative space" – or more correctly, one of these modes – through which modernity is framed by present capitalism(s)[60]? In which ways does contemporary capitalism specifically combines the ideas of autonomy and mastery that mark a situated (European firstly, Western then) conceiving of modernity?

The Network Model: The rise of a More Open and Democratic Society or…

What I name here the "*network model*" cannot be probably drawn as an already definitive and clearly structured societal architecture, and I do not have primarily in mind the many developments in the strictly scientific fields of application of network approaches (Watts, 2004), even if these studies either confirm the relevance (also in the scientific research) of the key-concept of network and constitute an authoritative source of a broader societal model. The point is that the "network society" (Castells, 1998) seems to work paradigmatically as, explicitly or implicitly, the most relevant matrix of different areas of social life's representation[61], based on the image of links interconnecting each other and on their

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[60] I do not have the space here for deepening a theme – varieties of capitalism – that is anyway extremely relevant for many aspects I am recalling. For a critical review about the literature and issues, see Peck, Theodore, 2007.

[61] I owe the ideas I am going to introduce in this section of the paper to Ota de Leonardis, who presented and discussed them in some seminars of the Centre she coordinates – "Sui Generis. Laboratorio di sociologia dell'azione pubblica", University of Milano-Bicocca (www.laboratorio-suigeneris.net) – and in some papers

emerging properties. The network model, going far beyond the borders of the sociology of organization[62], seems to be considered as the most appropriate answer (in terms of sensemaking, as we have seen) to a social environment that is more and more characterized by its *complexity* (Taylor, 2001; von Foerster, 1984). Schematically summarized, we can conceive complexity as a social condition in which uncertainty is a structural factor (and not only marking some social parts of the system itself); in which social actors and organisations are always experiencing problematic situations in which there are much more possibilities than the realized ones; in which the whole system is always something more than the mere sum of its singular components and its properties are always emerging from the system as a whole; in which it is impossible finding a unique centre from which the whole system can be controlled and, in case, changed; in which the important relationships among its parts are not ruled by mechanic and linear ties, but by processes of circular interactions, feedbacks, etc.; in which the observing and the observed actors/systems are not independent, but they mutually influence each other (as in the case, I recalled at the beginning, of the social imaginary's effects social sciences contribute to produce and circulate); in which the playing actors/systems are learning ones, operating through symbolic systems (languages, cultural forms) in which self-representations and regimes of justification (i.e. that ones I am here discussing) are working; in which the more systems are closed (that is: their code of self-definition is sophisticated), the more they are open (that is, the larger is the part of

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(2008; 2009). Of course, she does not have any responsibility about my elaboration and recontextualization of her thought.

[62] Even only considering the literature of my country, the centrality of the concept of network for the analysis of organizations and institutions is particularly evident: see Bifulco, 2008; Butera, 2009; Pichierri, 2002. More in general, the origins of the success of that concept are discussed by Podolny & Page, 1989 and by Powell, 1990, and the crucial role the networks have in the contemporary economic organizations is emphasized by many scholars collaborating in the book edited by DiMaggio (2001) about the "twenty-first century firm". More recently, studies seem to give more attention to the process than to the structures (from the network to the networking: Bruni & Perrotta, 2007): in this direction we can group different perspectives of research: Czarniawska, 2004; Knorr Cetina, 2005a, 2005b.

environment they effectively treat); and in which, due to all these properties, the predictability of the future states and evolving directions of the whole system are very low.

Principles and rules of network are pointed out in many different – natural and artificial – systems, studied through scientific researches and mathematical models (Watts, 2006; Barabasi, 2003): the model, via this growing naturalization, increases its power and its hegemony in the struggle for the "interpretative space". Networking is the key-concept in a very broad range of social fields: from civil society organizations to social welfare and social work; in particular, it has a crucial role in the "new spirit" of the "connecting" capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). The latter is fully embodied by the so-called passage from hierarchy to networking mode of coordination that represents a sort of law either in the global economy and business, in the working arrangements and management philosophies and in the corporate organization. A new "regime of justification" (Boltanski & Thevenot, 1991; Wagner, 1999), a grammar of motivations for action, is emerging, effectively pictured by the "cité par projects"[63] (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; 2002), with its criteria of evaluation and conventions.[64] In the moral-political framework of the "cité par projects", the most relevant inequalities and differences among social actors depend on the (fair or opportunistic) ways of managing networks, on the actors' capability of moving themselves along and among them, and on the length and the range of the networks they can participate. In this world, being connected is the fundamental prerequisite of inclusion.

The featured society of this model, its way of interpreting the combination of autonomy and mastery appears to be more open and more democratic than the traditional ones: based on the principle of self-organization and of dismantling any hierarchical criteria,

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[63] Without entering the complex vocabulary and theoretical instruments of the (French) studies about regimes of justification and conventions, it can be recalled here that different "cities" correspond to different moral orders through which social actors coordinate and legitimate their actions.
[64] The sociological and economic study of conventions is already a broad field of research. For a first introduction to it, see Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Borghi & Vitale, 2007; Jagd, 2007; Thevenot, 2004.

it promotes an idea of autonomous auto-organizing social actors and social communities; emphasizes actors' direct doing and participating; and promises to destroy old hierarchical and static impediments to the full freedom of individual actors. Many examples of the possible achievements of such a "Flatland", horizontally structured social world come from the economic field, in which new principles and rules are emerging. In the network economy, for instance, innovation and information do not come from the (standard) market actors based on the intellectual property, but from a combination of (i) a consistent role of not business sources (public and private) and (ii) a large presence of market actors not adopting intellectual property models of business and, more in general, a growing role of not trade models in economic activities (Benkler, 2006)[65]. This new economic environment is presented as intrinsically more democratic, characterized by the democratization of the productive instruments (i.e. the personal computer), the democratization of the distributive chains (networks, particularly digital networks, make easy-reachable any link) and the democratization of consuming (substantially enlarging the possibilities of direct contact between supply and demand) (Anderson, 2006). These can be interpreted as the contemporary outcomes of the profound changes beginning more than twenty years ago occurring in the "new social economy" (Sayer & Walker, 1992), in which communication and social interaction assumed a crucial role and the interpenetration among different phases, previously separated, has intensively grown, demanding thick and complex dialogical chains among activities of design, production, distribution and consumption (Veltz, 2001). Material goods continue to remain central in our working and consuming activities, but the role played by immaterial dimensions (information, communication, relational competences, cultural

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[65] Even if outside the digital economy sphere, where the most part of these examples are usually taken from, there are many evidences of a sort of very traditional process of capitalist accumulation through new versions of 'enclosures' concerning many spheres of social and natural life (see, for instance, Zeller, 2008), going in the direction of what has been identified as "biopolitics" or "politics of life itself" (Rose, 2007).

frames, symbolic systems etc.) in these activities and the way that immaterial dimensions are produced, shared, mobilized and experienced via networks, are now in the very heart of the economic world.

However, other important areas of the "interpretative space" are also affected by the concrete working of the principle of self-organisation: as far as law and rights are concerned, "societal constitutionalism" and the return of "lex mercatoria" in the context of the global economy (Teubner, 2002, 2007) exemplify the de-construction of the formalized hierarchical rules and institutions, in favor of horizontal configurations of social relationships; and the governing of society has itself fully embraced that model, as its more currently fundamental guideline – the concept of "governance" – consists in the 'art of governing networks' (Sabel, 2001; Sheuerman, 2004). A "network self-regulating structure", in which individuals can directly and reciprocally arrange their behaviors, makes institutional devices and juridical techniques less and less influential (Supiot, 2005: 145).

… or the Symptoms of an Increased "Capitalist Synchronization"?

The network model, as a specific mode of framing the "interpretative space" in which ideas of autonomy and mastery are combined, affects "the registers of justification and evaluation, which are mobilized in the situation but transcend it" (Wagner, 1999: 344; Thevenot, 2007). The reproduction of the capitalist regimes of action needs motivational resources, as Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis of the 'new spirit of capitalism' (1999) pointed out, that are not merely reducible to the capitalist practices in themselves. Social actors actively interpret and make sense of situated contexts of action through orders of justification, whose relative stability goes beyond the specific situation itself. This also means that a model is not a monolithic, univocal fate. It gives a general framework, in which different, possibly

opposite and conflicting views can emerge and intensify their power: "no *pensée unique* is sustainable and critique always possible (…); current critical analysis has to live up to the exigencies of our modern condition and has to avail itself of the interpretative possibilities that modernity offers. Critique of capitalism now means criticizing a particular interpretation of modernity, and the ways it has become dominant and has shaped practices and institutions" (Wagner, 2001: 24). In particular, I am here focusing on the effects the dominant interpretation characterizing the exit from our "organized modernity" (Wagner, 2000) has on a specific and crucial pillar of that interpretation itself and on the paradoxical or problematical developments related to it: the concept of *individualization*.

Let me summarize, in a very schematic way, how the process of Western de-traditionalization (Heelas et al., 1996), and the relative shaping of the relationship between individuals and society, can be conceived as a double process. On the one side, this departure from tradition has been related to the passage from a holistic societal representation based on the idea of a hierarchical conception of the social order, in which social ties are mainly ordered through (hierarchical) relationships between man and man, to an individualistic and (formally) egalitarian societal representation, which mainly insists on the relationship between man and things (Dumont, 1977). On the other side, this de-traditionalization is a result of a long historical process of construction of the concrete social bases of the individual citizen: the anthropological passage from the holistic to the individualist conception of the social world requested the building of "social property". The latter – permitting the access to some basic social rights and goods (social protection, education, health, etc.) on which the realization of the project of the individual's autonomy is concretely based – had to be extended (through social struggles and conflicts) to the entire society, beyond those persons privileged by their inherited 'individual property' (Castel & Haroche, 2001; Castel, 2002).

The project of the modern individual actor, the *homo aequalis* no longer submitted to the yoke of personal bonds and subordinated to social totality, has been rising as a project of emancipation to be pursued through the inscription of individuals in collective systems of regulation – mainly entered via inclusion in the labor market[66] – that promoted and enlarged individual autonomy.

The concept of individualization is now inscribed in a new social context, in which a comprehensive "rebalancing of individual and collective responsibility that asks employees to make themselves the entrepreneurs of their becoming" (Zimmerman, 2006: 468) has been taking form. In "connecting capitalism" and in its complementary "network society", institutions and collective systems of regulation and representation have been extremely weakened, whereas a general shift of social responsibilities from the public to the private sphere (the realm of individuals and their families) has been strongly transforming the meaning of individualization (Clarke, 2004)[67]. It is right in this context that the concept of individualization – a fundamental normative pillar of the European and Western self-representation of modernity – can currently be seen as a terrain of (normative) tension, a space in which a paradoxical contradiction[68] can be observed. While emphasizing more and more explicitly as a crucial dimension the "network society" and "connecting capitalism" in the realm of welfare (increasingly insisting on the idea of activating individuals) as well as in

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[66] Here, we find the ambiguous nature of this project as far as, for instance, its gendered nature is concerned: that project of emancipation, indeed, has clear limits due to the historical predominantly male participation to the formal labour market, leaving all the social work needed for reproducing the social bases of that labour market in the dark side of the scene.

[67] An evident example of this social and institutional metamorphosis can be found in the genealogy of one of the crucial concepts in EU official vocabulary: employability. In line with the growing emphasis on individual responsibility that I have stressed, we can see a transition from a definition of unemployment as a structural effect of the socioeconomic cycles and organisation, to a definition of that condition as the result of personal deficiencies of employability (Borghi, 2008; Serrano & Crespo Suárez 2008). This way, most of the responsibility of facing unemployment lies within the individual himself.

[68] A paradox is a specific form of contradiction, according to which the concrete social pursue of an (original) intention paradoxically diminishes the effective probability of its realisation: "a contradiction is paradoxical when, precisely through the attempt to realize such an intention, the probability of realizing it is decreased" (Hartmann & Honneth, 2006: 47).

the labor market and corporate management (emphasizing "human resources" and individual "human capital"), individualization undergoes a strong turn of its (original) meaning: this is the process in which *a project of qualitative self-emancipation* (the original meaning of individualization) *has been twisted in a systemic pre-requisite* (Honneth, 2004). Echoing the second perspective about modern social life I summarized above (the critical one), we can say an unfulfilled promise about a key-idea of the modern project can be identified. Individualization still remains one of the key features of the current welfare capitalist regimes of action; but whereas in its origins it was part of an emancipatory project of qualitative individual self-realisation, it now turns into a *systemic pre-requisite of individual performance*, pushing people to search for biographical solutions of structural problems (Beck 1992) and producing rising levels of mental and psycho-social sufferings (with concrete, clinically observable, effects; Ehrenberg, 1999; Dejours, 1998)[69]. "With the institutional transformations Western capitalism has undergone in the past twenty years, the ideal of a self-realization pursued throughout the course of a life has developed into an ideology and productive force of an economic system that is being deregulated: the expectations individuals had formed before they began to interpret their own lives as being an experimental process of self-discovery now recoil on them as demands issuing from without, so that they are explicitly or implicitly urged to keep their options regarding their own decisions and goals open at all times" (Honneth, 2004: 474). In other words, whereas the concept of individualization is as old as the Western project of modernization, what is really new is a structural convergence of both public and private agencies and organizations in realizing a common aim: to produce an individuality herself independently capable of action

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[69] Regarding the social and individual pathologies caused by recent transformations of work, there is a significant convergence, despite different theoretical and methodological approaches, of many scholars. See, for instance, Castel, 1995; Deranty, 2008; Hartmann, Honneth, 2006; Sennet, 1998.

and driven by her internal motivations (Ehrenberg, 1999: 311-312). In this emergent social and governmental landscape, the transformation I am emphasizing – the paradoxical torsion of the individualization principle – is particularly evident when we look at the named "network capitalism". "The most important criterion for describing this new capitalism (...) is the readiness to self-responsibly bring one's own abilities and emotional resources to bear in the service of individualized projects. In this way, the worker becomes an 'entreployee' or himself an entrepreneur; no longer induced to participate in capitalist practices by external compulsion or incentives, he is in a sense self-motivated" (Hartmann & Honneth, 2006: 45). Thus, we can say that the individualization process takes on a new social meaning, coherent with the development of new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski, Chiapello, 1999) and with its anthropology of flexibility (Strath, 2000; Wagner, 2000; Sennett, 1998) and of employability (Garsten, Jacobsson, 2004) . Of course, as I stressed before, even if the picture drawn till now evidently represents the mainstream interpretation of the combination of autonomy and mastery, other interpretations are on stage as well. Alternative scenarios are always possible, and in some ways already working in the social scene: in this "interpretative space", both ties and opportunities are reconfigured, and the results are not fixed, being linked to an always open history of political, social and cultural controversies and conflicts.

On the one side, social complexity, in the sense I have been schematically above recalling (missing of a determining centre, no linear relationships, very low future predictability, etc.), is clearly mining the traditional architectures and modes of social coordination, opening new, more horizontally structured forms and principles of social organizing. On the other side, renewed risks of "re-feudalisation", going back to what Dumont (1977) named an "holistic society" based on servile ties among men, and to feudal vassal-like forms of relationships, particularly evident in the current work arrangements and

industrial relations (Supiot, 2005), are some of the most visible consequences of these changes. In the new spirit of capitalism, workers' obedience and subordination are no longer sufficient: new quality standards and reducing costs' targets require completely independent and responsible individuals ("entreployee") (Supiot, 2006: 151). As such, any discussion about the possible evolutions in social theory and in the relationship between sociology and critique should take into account this complex landscape, with its combination of new and old risks possibilities, new and old possibilities.

Looking Elsewhere? *Possible* Modernities

In order to answer in a critical way to the challenges advanced by the dominant capitalist framing of the "interpretative space" of modernity, I think we have to look at the reflexive efforts I have been introducing at the beginning of my paper. The critiques to the mainstream interpretation of modernity I have been recalling are mainly internal to the same root of thought they are criticizing, and could be seen as an up-to-date version of the second perspective on modernity. These critiques are always pronounced from the centre, from what Connell (2006) named the "Northern" or "metropolitan" theoretical or empirical point of view, which is a perspective marked by its claim for universality (completely omitting its space-temporal situated nature), its reading from the centre (simply generalizing the specific experience of metropolitan countries and the coordinates resulting from the metropolitan literature), its gestures of exclusion (the social thought of colonized cultures is rendered irrelevant to the main theoretical conversation) and its grand erasure ("The erasure of colonial experience and social process is so common in metropolitan social theory that it usually goes unnoticed"; Connell, 2006: 258-262).

But other directions can be looked for, other sources can be experienced, and other voices can be listened to. So, following Connell's very insightful analysis, the question is:

can metropolitan thinkers avoid the mentioned limits of their intellectual position? I think that, in answering in a positive way to that question[70], she got the point insisting on a plurality of possible sources and paths more than on a traditional monological intellectual architecture. "The alternative to 'northern theory'" – in her words (Connell, 2006: 262; see also Papastergiadis, 2010) – "is not a unified doctrine from the global South. No such body of thought exists nor could it exist. Indeed, one of the problems about northern theory is its characteristic idea that theory must be monological, declaring the one truth in one voice. It seems to me that a genuinely global sociology must, at the level of theory as well as empirical research and practical application, be more like a conversation among many voices."

Dipesh Chakrabarty's seminal work (2000) gives us a possible frame for this research direction. In the second Chapter of that book ("The two histories of capital"), he deepens Marx's analysis of the relationship between history and capital. The basic problem here is "the fact that global capitalism exhibits some common characteristics, even though every instance of capitalist development has a unique history" (Chakrabarty, 2000: 46). This has to do with the co-existence of two historical spaces: on the one side, there is a history that "forms the backbone of the usual narratives of transition to the capitalist mode of production (…) a past posited by capital itself as its precondition" (Idem: 63). Chakrabarty called this abstract, homogenous historical space History 1. But, as Marx clearly showed, there are other histories that "inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate the run of capital's own logic" (Idem: 64). In this sense, for instance, a specific laborer embodies simultaneously both History 1 (as daily reproducing the logic of capital acting as abstract labor) and History 2 (as

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[70] Of course, he is perfectly conscious of the risks and the limits this choice implies: "there are costs in doing so, including the very heavy commitment of time involved in cultural re-tooling, and risks to professional credibility (consider what an acceptable citation list is for a paper in a "mainstream" North Atlantic journal). And there are many difficulties for metropolitan social theorists in entering dialogues with the majority world – among them difficulties of language, of limited personal contact, and ethical problems about the appropriation of knowledge" (Connell, 2006: 263).

a historically, socially and culturally concrete person who can "enact other ways of being in the world – other than, that is, being the bearer of the labor power"). So, the idea of History 2 "gives us a ground on which to situate our thoughts about multiple ways of being human and their relationship to the global logic of capital" (Idem: 67).

Chakrabarty's work helps us in two ways. Firstly it shows us (together with other scholars[71]) the real meaning of what is usually considered the most important contribution of postcolonial studies in the understanding of modernity: pluralizing modernity. These studies[72] and their descriptions of a plural modernity, in fact, help us "to understand modernity not that much as an 'unfinished project', but rather (…) as a contested field" (Mezzadra, 2010: 3): a field which, already in its origins, is the terrain of a struggle about the meaning of being modern, whose borders are far beyond the strict ones in which that 'unfinished project' has been shaped. Moreover, this perspective points out a contested field or, at least, a *space of possibilities* (possible modernities; de Sousa Santos, 2007) changing throughout the time, but that is always and everywhere present. In this sense "History 1 and History 2, considered together, destroy the usual topological distinction of the outside and the inside that marks debates about whether or not the whole world can be properly said to have fallen under the sway of capital. Nor is it something subsumed into capital. It lives in intimate and plural relationships to capital, ranging opposition to neutrality" (Chakrabarty, 2000: 65-6). This means, firstly, that 'possible modernities' can be looked for at the margins (of time and space) of the (European) areas in which Western modernity uses to self-represent its roots. Postcolonial studies, but also the "de-linking" intellectual move – an epistemic and thinking de-colonization (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006; Mignolo, 2007) – and other different

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[71] I owe this consideration to Sandro Mezzadra's (2010) discussion of Chakrabarty's work.
[72] But not only historical and sociological studies: some narratives give us a vivid idea of the concrete tensions and violence linked to the structural relationship between History 1 and 2; see, e.g., Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Contacts between Chakrabarty's and Ghosh's work are directly testified by their correspondence: Ghosh, Chakrabarty, 2002.

intellectual efforts (the conversation among many voices), coming from many latitudes and with different approaches, aims and accents[73], can be thought as strategies going exactly in this direction.

But, at the same time, Chakrabarty's work also opens another strategy that goes in an opposite direction. Whereas the first one emphasizes critical resources outside the Western experience, this second strategy proposes to look for and enact critical potentialities that, even if forgotten or marginalized by the capitalist interpretation of modernity, are (have been) internal to Western experience itself. Recalling Boaventura de Sousa Santos' words (2009: 106), "many of the problems confronting the world today result not only from the waste of experience that the West imposed upon the world by force, but also from the waste of experience that it imposed upon itself to sustain its own imposing upon the others". According to this perspective, the sources for critical devices can be looked for in many directions and the conversation we already mentioned can go in many (spatial and temporal) directions.

So, thinking of modernity as a contested field and in terms of possible modernities, in the way I have been doing here, permits a promising redesign of the relationships between sociology and critique. These relationships have been recently at the centre of a renewed sociological discussion, even if from different perspectives and approaches (Burawoy, 2005; Boltanski, 2009; Sayer, 2009; Schuurman, 2009). In some way, Chakrabarty's work and his distinguishing History 1 from History 2 can be fruitfully put into relationship with a recent work of Luc Boltanski. Discussing the contribution of sociology to the social critique, the

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[73] Connell herself (2006: 262) gives some examples in this sense, for building "a far more inclusive sociology [that] exist in a number of well-established bodies of thought", from the "Islamic debate about modernity" she introduces, to the "African discussion of "indigenous knowledges" and the possibility of an African renaissance"; "the theorization of autonomy, dependence, and globalization conducted in Latin America"; "the international feminist critique of metropolitan hegemony, and the development of global dialogue among different feminisms"; and "the Indian debate on what Ashis Nandy calls 'culture, voice and development'".

French scholar (2009: 75-76) identifies two possibilities of describing social reality. The first one consists of describing "a *social world already done*": the "society is *already there*" and the sociologist has to draw a cartography of structures in which any individual is thrown, structures and conditions determining their behaviors at their shoulders; in the same way, the historian has to describe historical processes as they result from the unfolding of the abstract logic of capitalist development, a history "*already done*" (History 1), in which all places and persons are "exchangeable with one another" (Chakrabarty, 2000: 71). Here, descriptions are drawn from the top, "more or less enclosing within brackets human beings" [Boltanski, 2009: 75]). A second possibility comes from describing "a social world as it is going to be done". Taking seriously into account the ways individuals enact and perform their reality, pointing out their "moral economy" (Thompson, 1974), a pragmatic sociology will enlighten individuals' interactive and interpretive competences. In addition, History 2 "beckons us to more *affective* narratives of human belonging", in which life forms cannot be exhaustively subsumed in the abstract categories of History 1. Descriptions are drawn *"from below"* and their privileged objects are situations (Boltanski, 2009: 76).

Whereas the first strategy of description corresponds to a traditional critical sociology perspective, the second one corresponds to a sociology of critical capabilities. Beyond their own limits and strengths, we need to combine both the critical sociology's program and the pragmatic sociology's program. But I think we can also combine these two programs with a third further possibility. What Burawoy (2005: 264) defines "organic public sociology" is, of course, something linked to that two programs, but also different from them. According to an "organic public sociology" perspective, "the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public. The bulk of public sociology is indeed of an organic kind – sociologists working with a labor movement, neighborhood associations,

communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organizations. Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education (…). The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life". More than the traditional image of the "engaged intellectual", it could be interesting (i.e. epistemologically fruitful) to recall here the concept of a "reflexive practitioner" (Shön, 1983) who refuses to limit his/her role to technical problem-solution (even if "engaged") sociological expertise and who is involved in all the phases a public facing a problematic situation is passing though, from the problem-setting to the problem-solution ones. An involvement in which he/she has to combine his/her specific competence ranges from the description "from the top" and that one "from below", to a third kind of (critical) effort, that is the "reflection-in-action" developing and growing through, in Burawoy's words, a "process of mutual education".

As such, in this framework, we cannot deny that the social world has an objective nature, that it is, in a way, already done and that is necessary to point out its rules and mechanisms (History and Sociology 1). But we can also work in order to point out social actors' critical capabilities (History and Sociology 2) and to develop a "organic public sociology" through which scholars (scientific communities and languages) and their publics (bearing their own critical capacities, competences, interpretations, etc.) mutually change themselves.

Table 1 – *A tentative scheme of strategies combining sociology and critique*

Interpretive Framework	Social World Definition	Researchers' Practice
History / Sociology 1	a world already done	a description, from the top, of objective social structures
History / Sociology 2	a world in its self-making	a description, from below, of actors' (critical) competences
organic public sociology / reflexive practitioner	a enacting world of co-evolving (scholars-publics) practices (possible worlds)	a mutually influencing (scholars-publics) possible-worlds-makings

Going back to the topics of the first part of this paper – the capitalist interpretation of modernity through the network models – alternative possible modernities (alternative modes of performing that "interpretative space") are already working. More specifically, thinking of the prevalent model of capitalist interpretation of modernity I discussed above, *possible networking* has already been pointed out. New forms and frontiers of political and trade union activism facing the "global value chains"[74], enacting new models of collective bargaining, and exploiting the visibility to the public opinion of networks linked to particularly famous brands in order to promote the adoption of quality standards, ethical codes and social responsibility criteria (Nadvi, 2008; Riisgaard, 2005), can give us, in this regard, very significant indications, even if the balance between the role of global and local networks has yet to be discussed (Wells, 2009; Webster, Lambert & Bezuidenhout, 2008). In any case, these experiences signal an emergent context in which the contested field I have been describing is changing: network models offer new possibilities of social organization, but persisting and renewed processes of social injustice demand to go beyond the myth of autopoietic regulation towards an intelligent governing of complexity in which moral

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[74] Studies on "global value chains" can be extremely useful for a concrete understanding of the characteristics and the limits of networks, at least in the socioeconomic sphere. See Bair, 2008; Gibbon, Bair & Ponte, 2008; about corporates' transformations in a network economy, see also Perrow, 2009.

rationality and institutional monitoring are combined (what Daniel Innerarity, 2008, termed "co-operative governing"[75]). Arjun Appadurai's research on "how grassroot movements are finding new ways to combine local activism with horizontal, global networking" (2002: 23; 2004), for instance, offers very important suggestions to the perspective I am trying to explore. We can see in that research an effective combination of the pragmatic program with a organic public sociology (with awareness of the limits emphasized by History/Sociology 1). Not only are specific situations described and actors' competences and voices assumed as starting points (despite their extremely marginal and humble condition: slum dwellers, toilers or "shit managers"), but also scholars' categories (democracy, politics, culture) are transformed thanks to the dialogue between these actors (their practices, their interpretations) and the scholar: democracy is reframed in terms of "deep democracy"; politics in terms of "politics of shit"; culture in terms of "capacity to aspire". Very briefly said, reinterpreting culture as the "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004) permits us to give space and value to apparently marginal knowledges and practices, strengthening "the capacity of the poor to exercise 'voice', to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life as they wish" (Ibidem). For the "citizens without a city" of Appadurai's research, the capacity to aspire means reframing one's own range of possibilities for action, escaping the fate that their social condition seems to condemn them to, without accepting external imposed moral or political orders. This combination of different critical scientific strategies, effectively combined by Appadurai, still represents a minority way of combining Northern and Southern

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[75] As he wrote elswhere (Innearity, www.barcelonametropolis.cat/en/page.asp?id=21&ui=41), "in the first place, it is necessary to realise that complex systems cannot be governed from a hierarchical vertex, which would mean a simplification that fails to match the wealth, initiative and expertise of its components. What is called for is not so much a reform of the administration as a review of the tasks of the State. It is not a matter of the State's withdrawing from the decisions it has to take, but of agreeing them in interaction with other social agencies. The form of co-operative government differs as much from the hierarchical model as from the one that recommends delegating to the market precisely because it does not shy away from decision-making, although it insists on taking decisions within a process of co-operation".

thought and experience (Rao & Woolcock, 2007)[76], but it is a promising and fascinating perspective of renewing the framing of the "interpretative space" and critiquing the dominant capitalist mode of combining autonomy and mastery, without substituting it with an already structured and closed system: whatever the relationship between sociology and critique should be about, in fact, it "should be about pertinent questions and not about correct answers" (Schuurman, 2009: 841).

In this sense, the postcolonial socio-historical landscape, with its broad heterogeneity of experiences of social injustice, seems to be an appropriate and challenging terrain of exploring the concrete possibilities of combining these three strategies of linking sociology and critique. These many and different experiences of social injustice, writes Burawoy elsewhere (2008: 384), "include "wage laborers but also embrace those who do not have access to wage labor and those who face land expulsions, water privatization, and more broadly, degradation of the environment". Sociologists who do not renounce to exercise their critical efforts find here a challenging field of work. "Whether the disparate struggles and communities that face commodification can find a common language to unify their protest remains to be seen. It is certain that the engaged sociologist has a role to play here, linking divergent struggles across uneven geographical and political terrains, and, to use Zygmunt Bauman's (1987) terms, not as an omniscient legislator but as a sensitive interpreter".

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[76] But changes in the international organizations' policy are possible: see, for instance, Vetterlein (2007) on the World Bank.

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Women for Science in Brazil[77]

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In the last few decades, it has been increasingly recognized that scientific capacity is essential to the national development of all countries. Science, technology, engineering and innovation should be seen as leading elements for social and economic development strategies and the driving force behind the knowledge-based economy and social progress.[78] It is also increasingly recognized that developing countries need to create the indigenous scientific capacity to understand, engage in and contribute to international scientific research and innovation in order to gain the capacity to create, apply and adapt science and technology for a national knowledge-based development.

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[78] For a thorough discussion of the issue, see OAS (2005).

But to do this, it is important to engage all its citizens. Democracy and integral development cannot be fully achieved without the full and equal participation of both women and men. A growing body of research has identified the progress in the last decades and the remaining challenged to fully integrate women in scientific development. Although women today can be the majority of students at the University level in many Western countries, the limited access of women in certain disciplinary fields, especially in higher positions of the science and technology (S&T) system, is still visible. A large number of international reports have been produced in the last few years[79], and their findings bring together the knowledge available in this field for many countries and regions of the world.

This paper will give a brief picture of the issues of women in science in Brazil, looking at the achievements of the last ten years and the remaining challenges. Brazil is an interesting case study, since it has a well-established science and technology system, strong women's representative organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, and defined policies for S&T development.

S&T in Brazil – The Last Sixty Years

Overall, Brazil has progressed significantly in addressing gender issues and reducing gender gaps. Women today constitute 44% of the workers in the labor force. Women's activity rates in the labour force increase substantially with education. In 2000, women with university degrees had an 82.3% activity rate, while the average rate for all women was 45.2%. This was still lower than masculine activities rates, 90.6% for those holding university degrees and

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[79] IAC 2006; OECD 2006; EC 2008; UNESCO 2007; EC 2009 and 2009a.

72.6% in average, but they are exceptional if compared to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.[80]

The Brazilian system of science and technology system was established in the last sixty years. In 1951, two central institutions were created, which continued to be major players in the S&T system today. The first was the National Research Council (CNPq – *Conselho National de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico)* with the central aim of supporting scientific research. The second was CAPES (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Ensino Superior)*, at the Ministry of Education, an institution focusing on the graduate training of university teachers but which has developed through the years a very efficient evaluation system for all graduate programs in Brazil.

The Ministry of Science and Technology was created in 1985 and has today under its coordination four national agencies linked to S&T: the Brazilian Space Agency, the National Commission of Nuclear Energy, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq); and the Agency for Financing Studies and Projects (FINEP). FINEP is the innovation agency and has been the agency that controls and coordinates the sectoral funds of the Ministry. The Ministry has also under its structure 26 national research institutions.

The budget for the Ministry has increased substantially in the last ten years by almost 300%, thanks to new sources of funding and the sectoral funds established in 2002. Today, Brazil has the largest investment in S&T in Latin America and the Caribbean, investing about 1.2% of its GDP. (Figure 1)

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[80] Bruschini (2000), p. 152.

Figure 1

Brazil – Comparing growth in S&T Budget with investment in S&T as percentage of GDP - 2000-2008
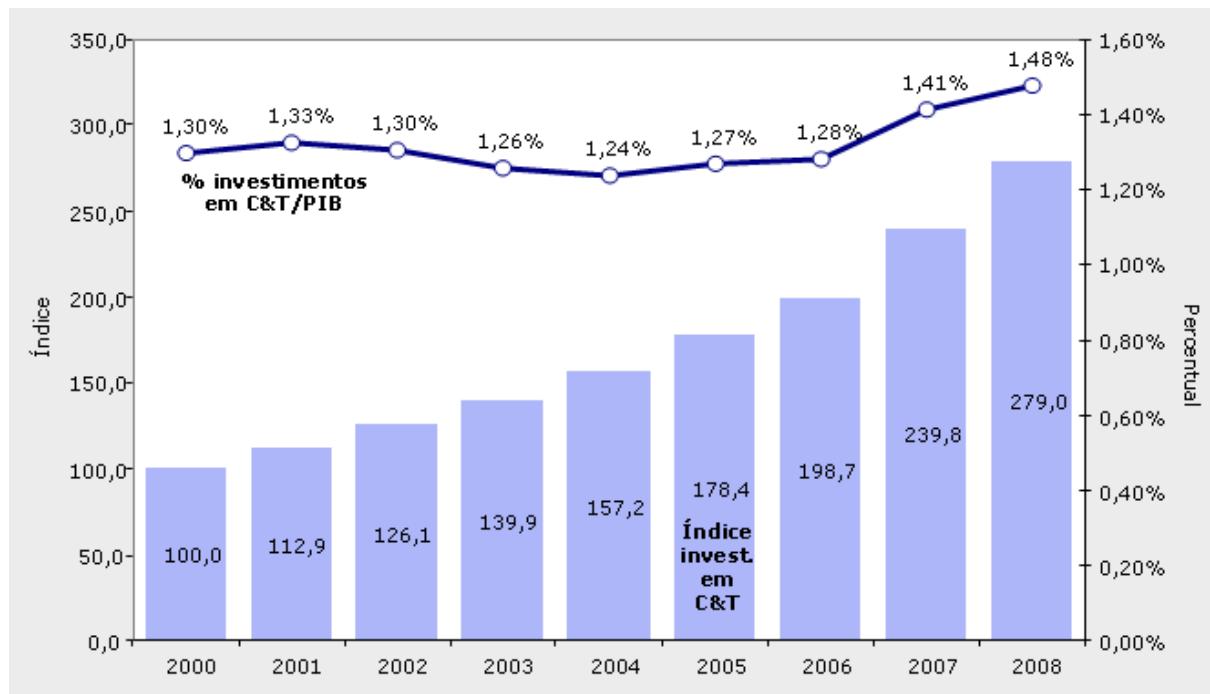
Source: Coordenação-Geral de Indicadores - ASCAV/SEXEC - Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia.
at: http://www.mct.gov.br/.

The Minister of Science and Technology is the Secretary of the highest national body for science and technology, the National Council for Science and Technology, an advisory consultative board, presided by the President of Brazil, with 13 Ministers as permanent members, and 14 representatives of the scientific and educational institutions and the private sector. The Ministry organizes the National Conference of Science Technology and Innovation, a weeklong countrywide event, now in its 4th meeting.

The Brazilian university system has grown significantly in the last decade, but research is concentrated in the public system, represented by the federal and state universities, and a small number of confessional institutions. The public sector represents around 30% of the higher education institutions.

67

In 2003, a Special Secretary for Policy for Women was created, with Ministerial status, substituting the National Council for the Rights of Women, which existed since 1985. In recent years, S&T has been one of the program areas of the Secretary. Two meetings, one in 2006 and another in 2009, "Thinking gender and science", were organized, bringing together an existing network of feminist research groups and nucleus to discuss the issue of gender in science. The Secretary also gives a prize, now in its sixth year, for schools and college and undergraduate students, called "Building Gender Equality". Both programs are part of the II National Plan for Politics for Women, addressing the issue of "strengthening the participation of women in a equal, plural and multiracial way in spaces of decision making; motivating the participation of women in scientific and technological areas".[81] Finally it is important to note that the Brazilian Congress has an active S&T Commission, both at the House of Representatives and at the Senate.

There are also solid institutions related to S&T in the non-governmental area. The Brazilian Academy of Sciences is one of the oldest, created in 1916, and the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science, created in 1949. Brazil has an impressive number of Scientific Associations and Societies in all disciplinary areas. The CGEE (Center for Strategic Studies and Management in Science, Technology and Innovation), created in 2000, is another important institution of the system, a think-thank that has produced a large number of analysis and reports on several aspects of the S&T system in Brazil. Other important actors in the S&T system are the agencies of support of S&T at the Estate level. The largest and most active is FAPESP, the *Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo*, established in 1962 and that has today a budget equivalent to the CNPq budget for the whole country, and FAPERJ *Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*,

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[81] Secretaria Especial de Política para Mulheres. II Encontro Nacional de Grupos e Núcleos de Pesquisas Pensando Gênero e Ciência.

established in 1980. These state support agencies were replicated in recent years in many other states of Brazil.

During the last fifty years, a national system of graduate programs was consolidated in the universities and many institutions of international level were created. In 2007, the evaluation system of CAPES, which remained under the Ministry of Education, graded 2.568 graduate programs of which 1.320 were Ph.D. programs[82].

There has been a strong capacity building effort financed by the government all along the last fifty years, with a notable increase in the last decade. In the 1990s, CNPq and CAPES conceded together around 40,000 scholarships per year. In the last decade, both institutions granted 60,000 scholarships in 2001 and around 90,000 scholarships in 2008 (Figures 2 and 3). If you add to that the scholarships granted at the State level, the number is even bigger. In 2004, for example, FAPESP granted an additional 5,000 Ph.D. and M. Sc. scholarships for the State of São Paulo alone.[83]

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[82] CAPES has a grading system that goes from 3 to 7, seven being the excellence programs of international level. Below 3, the program is not allowed to give titles and has to restructure, or face closure.
[83] The system in Brazil grants M. Sc. and Ph.D. scholarships for all students that are accepted in the graduate programs of excellence; the percentage decreases at the lower levels of evaluation. Scholarships are granted to all accepted students, irrespective of nationality.

Figure 2

CNPq - Total Number of Scholarships

All categories – 2001-2008
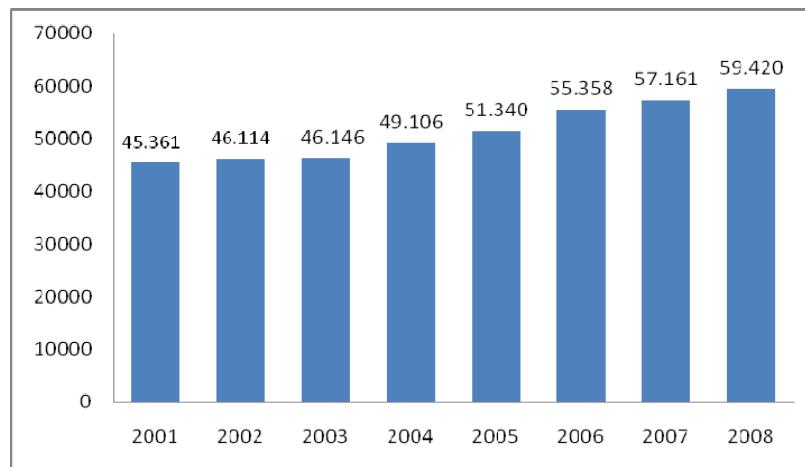
Source: CNPq

Figure 3
CAPES – Brazil – Total scholarships conceded nationally –
All levels 1996 - 2008
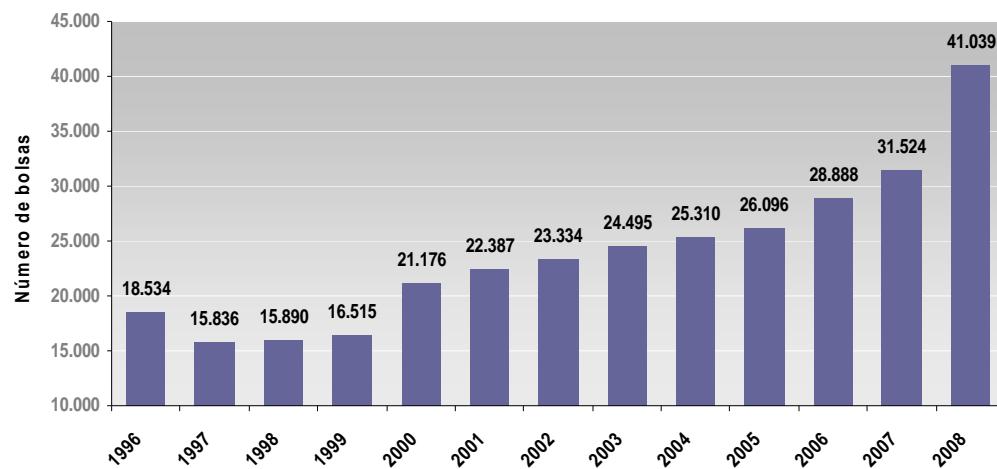
Source: CAPES-MEC

Brazil graduates today 30,000 M. Scs and 10,000 Ph.Ds (Figure 4). This capacity building effort has effectively created an important research community in Brazil. The date base of CNPq, Census of Research Groups, initiated in 1993, shows a significant increase along the years. The data base registers for 2008 approximately 23,000 active research groups, in 422 institutions, congregating 104,000 researchers, of which approximately 67,000 are with Ph.D. (Table 1).

Figure 4
CAPES – Brazil – PhD and MSc graduates
1987-2007
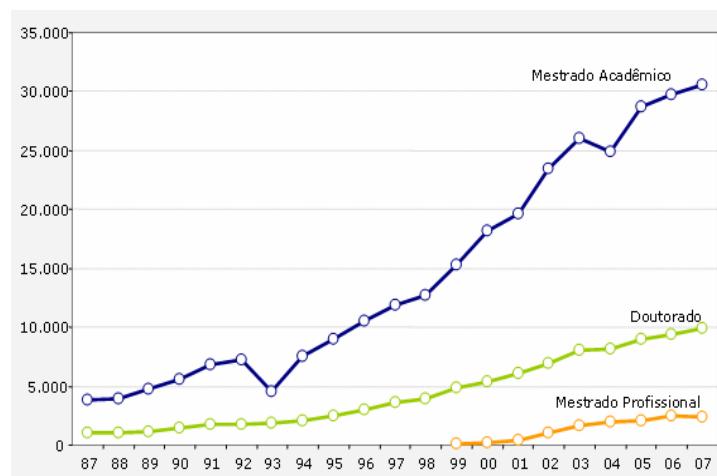
Fonte: CAPES MEC. Elaboração:Coordenação Geral de Indicadores ASCAV/SEXEC MCT.
Note: The Professional MSc started in 1999.

Table 1
Number of Institutions, Research Groups, Researchers and Researchers with PhDs.
Brazil, 1993-2008

	1997	2000	2004	2006	2008
Institutions	181	224	335	403	422
Research Groups	8.632	11.760	19.470	21.024	22.797
Researchers	34.040	48.781	77.649	90.320	104.018
PhDs	18.724	27.662	47.973	57.586	66.785

Source: Census of Research Groups. CNPq.

This steady investment in science and technology resulted in a substantial growth of Brazilian

71

scientific publications. Brazilians published, in 2008, about 30,000 papers in scientific

journals, representing 2.6% of global publications (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Number of Brazilian papers published in scientific journals indexed by Thomson/ISI
and percentage in relation to world publications
1981 – 2008
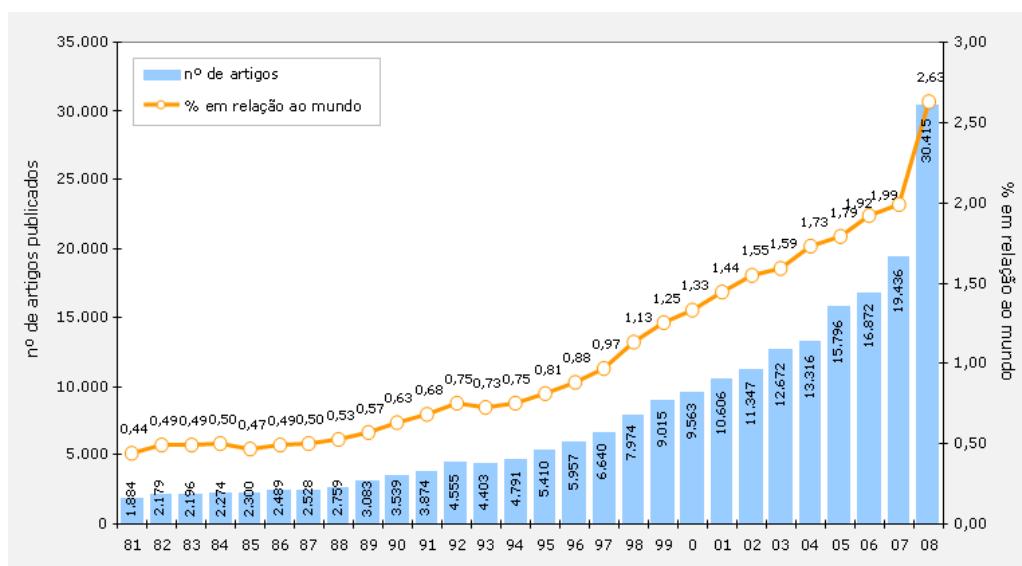
Source: Incites, Thompson Reuters. Elaborated by: Coordenação-Geral de Indicadores – ASCAV/SEXEC –
Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia, at: http://www.mct.gov.br/.

Women in Science in Brazil

What do we know about the position of women in this robust S&T system and what trends

can be detected? Women today (2008) constitute 55% of all university students in Brazil and

60% of those finishing a university degree (Table 2). The distribution of women students by

disciplines follows a well-known pattern: a great majority in humanities, half or a small

majority in social sciences and health sciences, and a minority in exact sciences and

engineering. One characteristic of the Brazilian university system is that all university

courses of the Federal and State system are free, although there are stiff entry examinations

for the most prestigious courses.

Table 2
Brazil – Number of students enrolled and concluding in undergraduate courses –
by sex – 2008

	Total	Men	Women	% Women
Enrolled	5.080.056	2.307.228	2.772.828	54,58
Concluding	800.318	321.650	478.668	59,81

Source: MEC/INEP/DEED
CEFET/IFET - Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica e Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia

Regarding teaching staff, women represented in 2008 45% of university teachers at the

national level (Table 3). No data could be found on the different levels of teachers by sex.

Given that in Brazil the recruitment for public sector universities is by public competition,

and that the Full Professorship, the last step in the University career, is also by public

competition, it will be important to have that information to see if this resulted in higher

number of women if compared to other countries.

Table 3
Brazil – Teachers in Universities – by sex – 2008

Teaching functions in universities by Sex 2008				
		Total	Men	Women	% Women
Brazil		338.890	186.720	152.170	44,90
	Public	119.368	67.443	51.925	43,50
	Private	219.522	119.277	100.245	45,67

Fonte: MEC/INEP/DEED

CEFET/IFET - Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica e Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia
Note: The numbers do not correspond to individuals, since the same teacher can exert a teaching function in one or more institutions.

Two case studies are worth mentioning. The first is a case study of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 1990, which showed that in that year, there were no women Full Professors at the Engineering School; and at the School of Medicine, only 14.29% of Full Professors were women.[84]

The advancements of the last decades are reflected in a more recent study of one of the larger State universities of São Paulo, UNICAMP, which shows that in 2006, women represented 34% of the total number of teachers in that University. They were, however, 42% of those holding a Ph.D., but only 23.2% of Full Professors. This is, however, a substantial increase from the situation in 1994, when only 10.3% of Full Professors were women at UNICAMP.[85]

Research in S&T

On issues related to research in S&T, more information is available, thanks to the census of research groups that is publicly available at the site of CNPq. The Census of Research Groups brings together information on active research groups since 1993. This information is voluntary and made directly by the research group leader. This database shows an important increase in the participation of women researchers, who represented 39% of all researchers in 1997 to 49% in 2008 (Figure 6).

There is, however, as expected, differences between the different research areas. In 2008, the last year available, women are the great majority (around 60%) in Arts and

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[84] Tabak, F. (2002).
[85] Vasconcelos, E. C. C. e Brisolla, S.N. (2009).

Linguistics; Health Sciences and Human Sciences; and have equal participation (around 50%) in Applied Social Sciences and Biological Sciences. But surprisingly, they constitute a third of researchers in Engineering; Exact and Earth Sciences; and Agrarian Sciences (around 30%) (Table 4).

Figure 6
CNPq Census of Research Groups
Researchers by sex (%) - 1995 – 2008
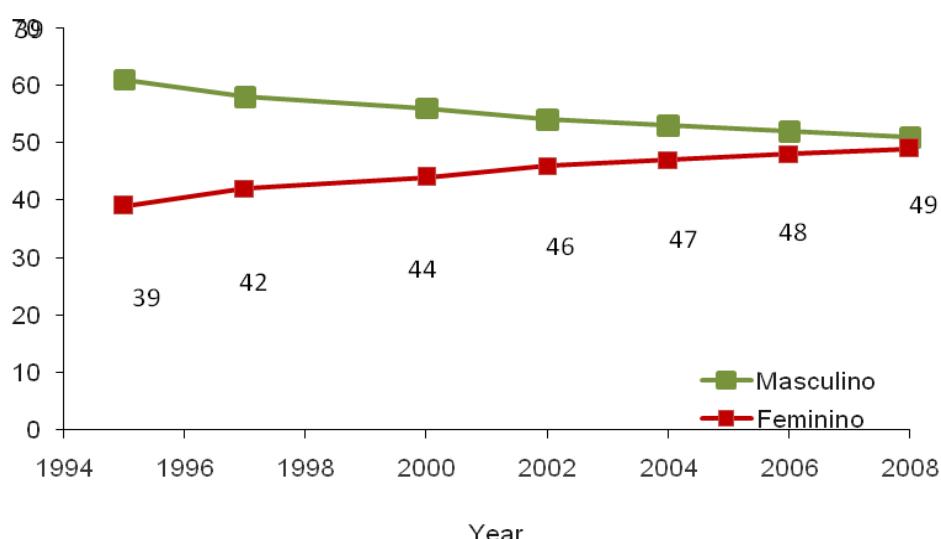
Source: CNPq, Census of Research Groups

Table 4
CNPq Census of Research Groups
% of Women Researchers by Scientific Area
2008

Scientific Areas	% of Women
TOTAL	48,89
Engineering and Computer Sciences	27,31
Exact Sciences and Earth Sciences	33,73
Agrarian Sciences	37,86
Applied Social Sciences	47,69
Biological Sciences	53,29
Human Sciences	59,27
Health Sciences	60,40
Arts and Linguistics	66,46

Source: CNPq, Census of Research Groups

The data base also identifies leadership by sex, and women group leaders represent 44% of group leaders (Table 5). However, this varies from around 60% of leaders in the areas they have substantial majority in, to almost parity in Applied Social Sciences and Biological Sciences. In Exact and Earth Sciences and Applied Social Sciences, the leadership participation of women is more or less equal, with their participation in those areas at around 30%. In Engineering and Computer Sciences, however, female leadership is well below their participation as researchers, reaching the low figure of 20% (Table 6).

Table 5
CNPq Census of Research Groups
% of Women Group Leaders
1995 – 2008

Percentage of Women Group Leaders - 1995-2008.							
	1995	1997	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
% Women	34,16	37,25	39,41	40,68	41,75	43,26	44,54

Source: CNPq. Census of Research Groups.

Table 6
CNPq Census of Research Groups
% of Women Group Leaders by Scientific Areas
2008

Scientific Areas	% Women Group Leaders
Engineering and Computer Sciences	21,90
Exact Sciences and Earth Sciences	28,21
Agrarian Sciences	32,29
Applied Social Sciences	44,20
Biological Sciences	51,26
Health Sciences	55,44
Human Sciences	56,37
Arts and Linguistics	66,49
TOTAL	44,52

Source: CNPq. Census of Research Groups

In this database, each research group lists not only the researchers, but also all students that are linked to each project. If you look at the sex distribution of the students that are part of the research groups, one sees that, in 2008, women are the majority at all levels: they represent almost 60% of all students, but they are also 55% of Ph.D. students, and 57% of M. Sc. students linked to the research groups (Table 7).

Table 7
CNPq Census of Research Groups
Percentage of Women Students in Research Groups – by level
2008

| Students in Research Groups	% of Women				
	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
PhDs	49,12	51,79	52,76	54,37	55,12
MSc	52,23	55,06	55,74	56,73	57,66
Undergraduates	58,18	58.09	57,38	58,52	59,51
Total	54,11	55,68	55,97	57,25	58,20

Source: CNPq. Census of Research Groups.

PhD Programs and Capacity Building

These findings are confirmed by another set of data, based on information gathered by CAPES through the 2,500 Graduate Programs. Every graduate course in Brazil fills a very complete report every year, the basis for the evaluation and program grading process. The recent publication, CGEE 2010, explored this data in great depth and gives us a clear picture of the Ph.D. graduates in Brazil between 1996 and 2008.

During that period, more than 87,000 students received their Ph.D. title in Brazil. As shown in Figure 4 above, in 2008, more than 10,000 PhDs were received, which represent 3.8 times the number of Ph.Ds received in 1996 (2,800). Since 2004, the majority of Ph.D. titles were given to women; in 2008 they represented 51.5% of all Ph.D. titles received that year (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Distribution of PhDs by sex – Brazil – 1996-2008
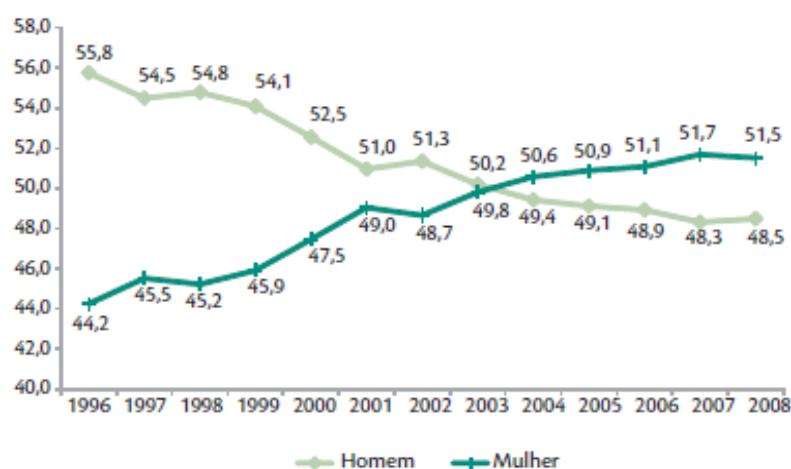
Source: Coleta CAPES (CAPES, MEC). In: CGEE 2010 p.101.

Comparing 1996 to 2008, the data shows an increase of percentage of women Ph.Ds in all scientific areas. The only area with a decrease in women participation was the already highly feminine Arts and Linguistic, which maintained, however, over 60% of women among its Ph.Ds in 2008. Even in Engineering and Exact and Earth Sciences, the percentage of women Ph.Ds was near or over a third of the total (Figure 7).

To understand which areas are still graduating fewer women Ph.Ds, one must look at the statistical annex that lists specific disciplinary areas.[86] We can then identify that in Engineering, the disciplines of Mechanical, Electrical and Naval Engineering have still less than 20% of women Ph.Ds in the period considered; other Engineering disciplines, however, show a very impressive percentage of women Ph.Ds, such as Chemical and Sanitary Engineering, which may even show a majority of women in certain of the years considered.

Exact and Earth Sciences, Astronomy and Physics graduate less than 20% of women Ph.Ds, while Mathematics and Computer Science have a percentage of women Ph.Ds between 20 and 30% during that period. Interestingly, two disciplines from the Human and Social Sciences also show a lower participation of women, Philosophy and Political Sciences. In Applied Social Sciences, Economy and Law seem to be still graduating a larger number of men Ph.Ds.

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[86] CGEE 2010, p. 171 to 177,

Figure 7
Distribution of Brazilian PhDs by % of women and scientific areas
Brazil – 1996 and 2008
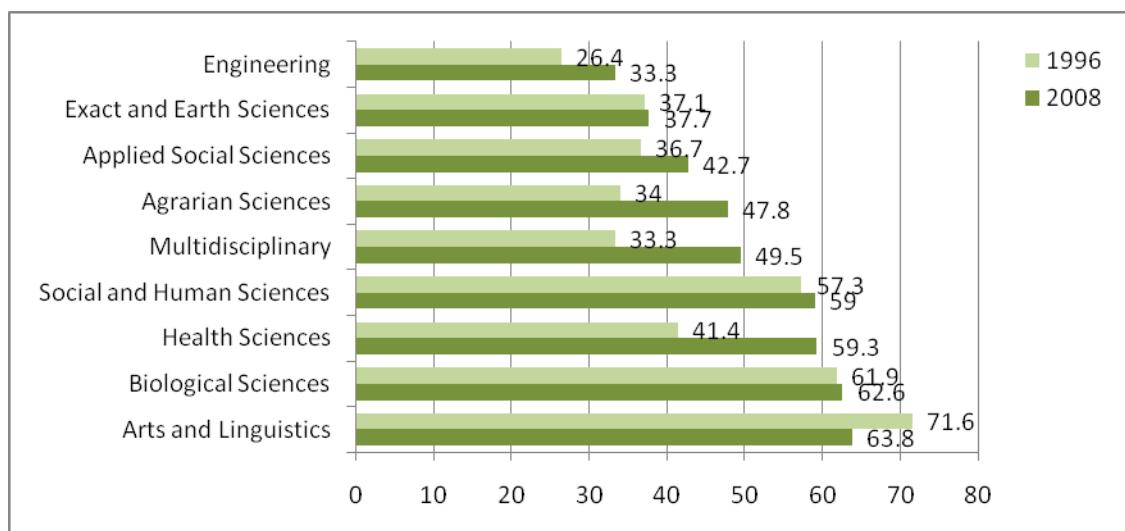
Source: Coleta CAPES (CAPES, MEC). In: CGEE 2010 p.103.

Advancement in the Research Career

There is another set of data that helps us to understand the place of women in the Brazilian research system: the information on scholarships granted by CAPES and CNPq. Both agencies distribute, as mentioned earlier, a large number of scholarships on a competitive basis at all levels of training. Since 2002, women were the majority of the students receiving the Undergraduate Research scholarships and the M. Sc. scholarships. In 2008, they were also the majority in the PhD scholarships. In all these categories, there was a constant increase in the last five years in the participation of women (Table 8). This fully confirms the findings of the other database used in the two previous sessions of the intense increase in the participation of women at the training and capacity building levels of the Brazilian system.

However, information on a different type of scholarship will allow a glimpse on what happens after the long training process of a scientific career, i.e., with those PhDs that remain

in the research and education tract and have to advance in their career. This is the Senior Research Fellowships, a program of fellowships that distributes on a very competitive basis around 6000 scholarships for the best researchers in the country. But this is the only category in which the participation of women has remained more or less stable in the last decade. Women have represented around 32 to 33% of these scholarships in the last decade (Table 8).

The Senior Research Fellowships have 5 levels of excellence ranging from 2, the initial entry point, to 1D, 1C, 1B and 1A. At the highest level of 1A, women have represented only 22 to 23% of grantees in the last decade (Table 9)

Table 8
CNPq – Total Number of Scholarship awarded by Category
Percentage of Women – 2002 -2008

Scholarships in Brazil				
Categories	**% Women**			
	2002	**2004**	**2006**	**2008**
Undergraduate (IC)	54	54	55	57
MSc (GM)	52	50	52	52
PhD (GD)	49	49	50	51
Post Doc (PD)	39	48	52	51
Senior Research Fellowship (PQ)	**32**	**33**	**33**	**34**
Total	**48**	**48**	**48**	**49**
Total Number of Scholarships	45.348	48.596	55.004	58.869

Source: CNPq/AEI   Table 29.1 Sexo_Mod_Pais Ext_0108_nº

Table 9
CNPq – Total Number of Senior Research Fellowships
Percentage of Women by Level – 2001 -2008

Senior Research Fellowship Levels	% Women							
	2001	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
1A	**22,3**	**22,1**	**22,9**	**23,8**	**23,2**	**23,0**	**23,0**	**23,6**
1B	27,1	27,8	27,2	27,2	28,6	30,4	31,8	31,8
1C	28,0	27,8	28,6	29,3	30,0	30,6	31,6	32,0
1D	32,3	32,9	34,0	34,6	34,5	35,0	34,2	32,9
2	37,2	37,8	37,7	38,3	37,7	37,2	36,8	37,0
Total	**32,1**	**32,3**	**32,5**	**33,4**	**33,3**	**33,4**	**33,7**	**33,8**

Source: CNPq/AEI

Analysis of why this is so is scarce, but an interesting recent article looks at the concessions of Senior Research Fellowships in the area of Physics during the period 2003 to 2007. The authors concluded that "the average number of publications of the female researchers is 72% higher than the same number for the male researchers at the entrance level, indicating that it is harder to young female scientists to enter into the research system".[87]

Many of the sociological analysis around the issue of advancement of women in scientific careers mention the small number of women in high level committees and commissions. The fellowships we are looking at are granted with the help of 50 advisory scientific committees in different disciplinary areas. It is possible to analyze the composition of these committees in the last concession of Senior Research Fellowships in December 2009 when the CNPq granted 5.826 fellowships. The 50 committees gathered 238 Brazilian scientists, of which 24% were women. The proportion of women varied greatly according to areas: 50% of the committee members were in Human Sciences and Applied Social Sciences;

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[87] Cotta, M.A.C.; Caldas, M.J.; and Barbosa, M.C. (2009)

22% in Life Sciences; and 5% in Engineering, Exact Sciences and Earth Sciences. In the committees, which varied between 3 and 8 members, there were 17 with no women members (Table 10).

Table 10
CNPq – Membership of Advising Committees for the selection of Senior Research Fellowships - % of Women by Scientific Areas
December 2009

Scientific Areas	Total Number of Members	Number of Women	% of Women
Human and Applied Social Sciences	**57**	29	50%
Health Sciences	98	23	22%
Engineering, Exact Sciences and Earth Sciences	83	6	5%
Total	238	58	24%

Source: CNPq webpage

As another possible indicator of women's participation in the higher levels of the system, data was gathered which were related to the 112 National Institutes of Science and Technology, a program that awarded substantial funding for 5 to 10 years for high profile institutes in all disciplinary areas. A search in the webpage of 109 institutes[88] identified 120 leaders, of which 21 were women (25%). Thirteen institutes had women as vice leaders. Harder to find was data on gender participation in R&D in the technological and private sectors. This is certainly a gap that needs to be addressed.

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[88] The webpage of 3 institutes did not open. Several institutes identified more than one leader.

Civil Society and Academic Institutions

The participation of women in the most prestigious scientific institution in Brazil, the Brazilian Academy of Sciences, is not very high, although it compares very favorably with Academies of Sciences from other countries, especially developed ones. An analysis of membership in October 2009 shows that, globally, women represent 13.3% of members. This does not change greatly from the beginning of the decade. As expected, this percentage varies within the different areas that are contemplated by the Academy, from 38% in the recently accepted area of Social Sciences, to 3.8% in Engineering (Table 11). On its long history, the Academy never had a women president. In the present Board, all directors are men, but among the 6 regional vice presidents, there is one woman.

Nevertheless, the Academy has developed important initiatives related to gender. It sponsors, to my knowledge, the only non-governmental program supporting young women scientists in Brazil, a partnership with the L'Oreal UNESCO Women for Science program. Now in its 5th year, the program gave in 2009 seven one year fellowships/grants for young women researchers in Brazilian institutions. The program has four areas: Physical Sciences; Chemical Sciences; Biological, Biomedical and Health Sciences; and Mathematics.

Table 11
Brazilian Academy of Science – Membership by sex and scientific area –
October 2009

Scientific Areas of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences	Men	Women	%Women
Agrarian Sciences	17	4	23,53
Biological Sciences	21	7	33,33
Biomedical Sciences	85	15	17,65
Engineering Sciences	26	1	3,85
Health Sciences	20	2	10,00
Earth Sciences	40	2	5,00
Physics	66	4	6,06
Mathematics	46	3	6,52
Chemical Sciences	42	7	16,67
Social Sciences	13	5	38,46
TOTAL	**376**	**50**	**13,30**

Source: ABC

The other large scientific institution, the SBPC, Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science, has a history of greater gender equity from the 1980s onwards. With a different scope of action, the SBPC has had two women presidents, from 1986 to 1989 and from 1999 to 2003. Since the mid-80s, many women have been part of the board of directors in different functions.

There is no consolidated information on the many scientific disciplinary societies and associations that are active in Brazil, but an informed guess would be that women scientists have a strong presence in these institutions. This is another set of data that should be explored.

Women in the Government Structure

Brazil has never had a woman Minister of Science and Technology, as is the case of several Latin American countries. Neither has Brazil a woman president in the four main agencies linked to the Ministry, such as FINEP and CNPq. Two recent Vice Presidents of CNPq, however, were women, from 1999 to 2002 and from 2007 to today. Since 2006, the most important think-thank in scientific issues, CGEE, has a women president.

The CCT, the highest S&T committee in the country, has no women among the 14 representatives of S&T institutions, but they are present as 3 alternates. From the 13 Ministers that are its permanent members, one is a woman. To my knowledge, the question of women in science or women for science was never one of the topics of the National Conferences in Science, Technology and Innovation.

The Brazilian Congress has a very low participation of women, in spite of a significant growth if compared to the 1990s. Of the 513 congressmen in July 2008, only 46 (8.97%) are women. In the Senate, of the 81 parliamentarians, 10 are women (12.34%). It is therefore no surprise that the composition of the S&T commissions, both at lower house and at the Senate, have no women.

Some Concluding Remarks

What can we conclude from this overview of the Brazilian S&T system and the position of women in it? First of all, in the last decade, there has been a very significant growth of the S&T system in Brazil and women have profited from this. The system is now a complex and robust system, with a steady source of funding and involves different types of institutions and organizations. The systematic effort of capacity building has effectively included women that

are now the majority of university students at all levels. Their presence in the scientific research community has also grown steadily.

But as in many other cases, women scientists tend to concentrate in certain areas, and are still a minority in engineering and exact sciences. But even in these areas, one can see an increase in their participation. This strong presence of women in university and in the academic sector in general is perhaps related to the fact that public sector offers free education and the governmental agencies awards program for scholarships is based in a transparent, decentralized and merit based system. Women can compete in an equal basis and have been immensely successful in doing so.

But we need to know more to understand the mechanisms of advancement in the scientific career, both in the education and research areas, which makes women still a minority at the higher levels. It is true that the massive entry of women in university and graduate programs is recent, and we will need a few more years to see how this generation will turn out. The Full Professors of today would have at a minimum 15 to 20 years of professional work. This would take us back to the 1990s where the situation was different. So it seems that the main objectives would be to understand how the leaking pipeline and the glass ceiling syndromes work in Brazil.

The presence of women at the governmental level of the science and technological system is similar, with a visible presence in the system as a whole, but fewer women at the highest level. But again, it would be interesting to have a more in- depth study of the advisory committees of the different government programs in science and technology. Women will be present, no doubt, but again at the very highest level they are still a small minority.

The presence of a Special Secretary for the Affairs of Women at Ministerial level and the fact that it has Science as one of its priority areas is a positive achievement. What we can

say, therefore, is that the transparency policy of the Brazilian government putting at the disposal of the public a large number of information and databases, allow us to have some very interesting glimpses of the place of women in the science and technological system. We need, however, further investigation and research to understand the social processes that are behind these statistics and follow this generation of women scientists to see whether they will be able to effectively impact the Brazilian scientific structure.

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In Conversation with Prof. Aihwa Ong

Interviewed by Vineeta Sinha on 21 May 2010 in Singapore

Aihwa Ong earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University, and is currently Professor of Socio-cultural Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include processes of globalization and transnationalism, sovereignty, citizenship, gender and sexuality, knowledge society, and technology in the context of Asia-Pacific. Her authored books are *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline* (1987, 2nd ed. 2010); *Flexible Citizenship* (1999); *Buddha is Hiding* (2003); and *Neoliberalism as Exception* (2006); as well as **co**-edited works that include *Bewitching Women, Pious Men* (1995); *Ungrounded Empires* (1997); *Global Assemblages* (2005); *Privatizing China, Socialism from Afar* (2008) and two forthcoming **co-edited volumes**, *Asian Biotech: Ethics and Communities of Fate* (2010) and *Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global* (2011). She has received book awards and a MacArthur grant, and her writings have been translated into French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Chinese.

Vineeta Sinha received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from Johns Hopkins University, and is currently Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. She is also one of the editors of *Asian Journal of Social Science* and editor of the ISA E-Bulletin. Her research interests include the political economy of health; theorizing healing and "alternative medicine"; sociology and anthropology of Religion; and the critique of concepts and categories in the social sciences. Her books include *A New God in the Diaspora?* (2005) and *Religion and Commodification: Merchandizing Diasporic Hinduism* (forthcoming, 2010).

Vineeta Sinha (VS): So you went to the USA to study English and the Fine Arts. Why did you switch to Anthropology? What attracted you to Anthropology?

Aihwa Ong (AO): When I first arrived at Barnard College (NYC), situated across the street from Columbia University…the place was taken over by students demonstrating against the 'secret' bombing in Cambodia. Nevertheless, in the midst of this war, I found myself, in a day-to-day sense, having to explain who I was. After many months of sharing a dorm room, my roommate described me simply as an 'Asian.' Then I took an Anthropology 101 class

where a graduate student demonstrated the art of stone tool-making, and something clicked in my head. Anthropology seemed to me to be a field that combines the study of art, techniques, and language in cross-cultural contexts. It was an easy switch from English and the fine arts to Anthropology. Two expatriate scholars – Clive Kessler and Joan Vincent – took me under their wings. At that time, there was very limited knowledge about Southeast Asia.

VS: Do you think things are different today in an American context as far as the lack of awareness about the specificity of Southeast Asian experiences is concerned?

AO: In the 1970s, the Southeast Asian field focused on indigenous political systems, a perspective shaped by Stanley Tambiah and Benedict Anderson. At Cornell, the SE Asian program was focused on the challenges facing newly independent countries in the region. In Anthropology, that interest was channeled into peasant and development studies. Clifford and Hildred Geertz and other anthropologists undertook a series of research on social change in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the Vietnam War, combined with the draft, and fears about the spread of communism, made Southeast Asia a looming political reality on campus. Anthropology professors at Columbia cancelled classes, conducted teach-ins on the war, and otherwise mobilized protests against US policy in mainland Southeast Asia. Graduate students mainly taught themselves, meeting in coffee shops and living rooms. The anti-war protests were a searing experience, and I was dissuaded from acquiring American citizenship for a long time. In my book, *Buddha is Hiding* (2003), I mention how the invasion of mainland Southeast Asia many years later inspired my research among Cambodian refugees in the Bay Area.

VS: How do you think Anthropology has changed in the US from the time that you were a graduate student? It is a very big question.

AO: It is a very big question, and my perspective is necessarily partial. When I was doing research among factory women in Malaysia, observations on the ground made me modify and question the structural Marxian approach that had dominated my training. I imported Foucault's ideas about surveillance as a tool of control and subjectification to the study of politics on the shopfloor and wider society. I was interested in how the Malay factory women began to think about who they were, their new identity, what kind of Malay Muslim model of womanhood was appropriate for working class women. By pulling together political economic and Foucauldian insights, I aimed for a dynamic conceptualization of power, without predetermining the outcomes of their different struggles**.**

To put it rather simply, Anthropology since the early 1980s has splintered into different orientations. Foucauldian analytics of power and subject-making directed attention to an investigation of the different ways the modern anthropos is constituted. For some of us, the Foucauldian turn expanded the anthropological inquiry into spheres of contemporary life – welfare, finance, science, etc. – that are shaped by situated interactions of rational forms, political and cultural practice**s**. This orientation shifts Anthropology from a focus on culture as the unit of analysis and directs ethnographic attention on to the play of power, heterogeneity and contingency in shaping contemporary human milieu**s**.

The collapse of Modernization and Marxian meta-theories also sparked a retreat into narrow culturalist pursuits. Anthropological flirtations with cultural texts center on discourse,

subjectivity, and contested meanings, but sometimes to the neglect of ethnographic research on the social conditions that form the context of human action. For some anthropologists, the 'text' took precedence over the field. The politics of representation, i.e. issues that affect all fields of human knowledge, for a short while came to have a somewhat paralyzing effect on empirical research.

VS: That is the turn in Anthropology inspired by Marcus and Clifford, the emphasis on textual production and discourse analysis and the idea that the text now becomes paramount even in fieldwork accounts.

AO: Clifford and Marcus invoked the crucial element of reflexivity in research and representation, and the recognition that the negotiation of meaning always takes place in a field of power. But for many anthropologists, rhetorical strategies and problems of ethnographic authority took center stage. In my view, Anthropology as a mode of inquiry goes beyond issues of ethnographic representation, to include the analysis of a variety of information (from archives, the library, other disciplines, newspapers, the media, political documents, etc.) that should be part of any study.

My own approach to these challenges is to look at practices, i.e. the focus is not 'people,' but social and institutional practices that are largely observable in the public realm. In *Global Assemblages* (2005), Stephen J. Collier and I call for a kind of mid-range theorizing where you "stay close to practice," i.e. abstract your claims from observable practices that seem constitutive of emerging situations. By following practices (individual and collective, informal and formal, scripted and spontaneous), we avoid intruding too much into people's lives (or respect the limits they imposed on our observations) and also avoid

some of the pitfalls of projecting our own models of what should happen. By staying close to "the hard surfaces" of everyday life (citing Geertz), we aim for a tighter grip on unfolding realities.

VS: I asked the question about change in Anthropology because I wanted to hear your views on some of the other debates that were current in the 1980s and 1990s like debates about what it means to be a native anthropologist or a feminist anthropologist, and about reflexive anthropology etc. All of these discourses surfaced in this period and what impact did they have on yourself coming from Malaysia and being embedded in American academia? How did you position yourself vis-à-vis the debates, for example, on native anthropology given the idea that the identity of the researcher is crucial to the research process?

AO: I don't see myself as a "native anthropologist" because I would like to think that as an anthropologist I can also be a little bit detached from my own ethnicity or gender or nationality when it comes to conducting research and making truth claims about a particular research situation. I am not sure what you mean by 'native': are you talking about racial or political origin or particularistic ties? I have spent large stretches of my life in at least three places (Malaysia where I was born, New York City, the San Francisco Bay Area) and I have conducted research in Southeast Asia, China and California where my being a "native" of some kind is always fraught with ambiguity. It seems more correct to say that as someone who embodies both particularistic and universal ties, I am a cosmopolitan with roots in many places.

But for a while, it was hot in Anthropology to label oneself as a 'native' or a 'feminist' in an era when identity politics was roiling American campuses. The Free Speech movement, multiculturalism, feminism, the so-called Vietnam war, and influx of immigrants from all over the world both challenged and enriched debates about the social and spiritual content of citizenship. As a consequence, affirmative action programs tried to rectify the historical abuses and sufferings inflicted on Native Americans (a very special category), African Americans, and other minorities. The political culture became more prepared to incorporate diverse voices, histories, and perspectives that had not been truly represented or respected on American campuses. As Donna Haraway observed, there is no a God's eye view of social realities, only partial perspectives.

But you are interested in the kind of "native anthropology" produced by foreigners outside the US. That issue was vividly posed by postcolonial theory, and for a while it gave so-called diaspora scholars a special status. I think postcolonial studies became influential because it seemed to promise the recuperation of a progressive tradition that we had in Marxism but was lost in the 1980s. Postcolonial theory seems to challenge the 'Empire' by fashioning a more savvy "native" perspective on diverse modes of exploitation than can be found in structural Marxism. The postcolonial field opened up an academic space for interdisciplinary exchanges and seemed to reduce some of the opacity of non-Western countries for students on American campuses. I am, however, skeptical about the universalizing claims of the postcolonial approach. It is a question whether postcolonial theory has greatly improved our understanding of the vast and complex realities of emerging India, and other non-Western regions that fell under the academic postcolonial spell.

VS: Why do you say that?

AO: I am no scholar of India but the continual mining of the colonial seems overdetermined both as a real world reference and as an analytic focused on a singular logic of postcolonial globalization. For the vast majority of Asians, the colonial period was just a tiny moment in their modern history. People are very future-oriented and focused on the remaking of the contemporary world in their own interests; their reference is resolutely global, not the colonial or its residual. Second, postcolonial theory invests in a special category of agents of social change. The colonial experience was only one source of many entangled forms of oppression, injustice, and corruption, and a plethora of actors have actively shaped the orientation of new nations**.** Obviously, there are significantly different situations emerging in the developing world that cannot be reduced to variants of a single logic.

VS: In your view then, what alternative modes of engagement can there be with non-European scholars or research from the perspective of Western scholars?

AO: It would be empirically incorrect to assume that a so-called native or postcolonial scholar has not also been formed through Western intellectual and cultural traditions. It would be disingenuous for non-Caucasian scholars (US- or foreign-born) in the Anglophone academic world to claim to be purely "native" in intellectual formation. The Saidian framework does not do justice to the complexity, heterogeneity, and fluidity of power relations that variously configure fields of knowledge and 'real' world contexts. We need to shift from the West versus the Rest map of scholarship and engage in debates about what

96

kinds of situated analytical perspectives and questions can be illuminating of the radically interconnected world in which we all live.

It does not help that scholars of Western history, politics and cultures, as dominant players in the Western academy, have not tried hard enough to break out of their comfortable positions. By having the developing world represented through the homogenizing gaze of postcolonial scholars based in Western academic institutions, there has been little inclination for serious engagement with scholars located in non-Western countries.

Nevertheless, anthropologists and researchers in Asia are extremely well-positioned to take on the Western academies. There is the great need to undertake serious research from different vantage points and at multiple scales, for us to understand the great transformation going on in this part of the world. In my view, the future vitality of many social science disciplines depends on excellent research conducted outside Western metropolitan countries, especially the kind of inquiries that investigate how "the global" in its many versions (capitalism, science, technology, etc.) is being reinvented in emerging regions.

VS: Could you please say something about how your works on Malaysia and China have been received in America academia and through what frameworks?

AO: I rarely read reviews of my works, but I have had some feedback from other sources. As I've mentioned, my book on factory women interrogated the notions of class consciousness by bringing other dimensions of race, gender and religion than those predicted by Marxian theory. The reception of that book is twofold. First, people were demanding a new kind of

97

ethnography on runway factories in developing countries and the variable social effects of what later came to be called globalization. The second interest was in the idea that spirit possession can be ignited by industrial discipline, i.e. a culturally specific way of responding to industrial oppression. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline* (1987) provides a new angle for looking at the uncertain and complex outcomes of industrialization for labor and gender politics in the developing world. A second edition of the book, with a new introduction and some new pictures, is coming out this fall.

In the mid-1980s, a colleague challenged me to "do something on Orientalism". I chose to investigate orientalization, with a small 'o', as everyday practices that both mock and subvert hegemonic discourses of Orientalism**.** Drawing on observations in Hong Kong and California, I noted that elite Chinese immigrants employed self-orientalizing representation in order to circumvent discriminations and gain acceptance in the host society. More broadly, *Flexible Citizenship* (1999) refers to a set of discursive and non-discursive practices for navigating a shifting global environment, especially the transnational strategies that take advantage of investment opportunities and political refuge in different sites. Some scholars **in** Hong Kong are not pleased because they resent what they see as a broad brush approach to ethnic Chinese as overly instrumental subjects. But "flexible citizenship" was not meant to be characterization of all Chinese. Hong Kong managers just happened to be my examples for explicating a set of transnational maneuvers that can also be found among other groups of migrants who try to get green cards in the West while maintaining a foothold in growing markets. Indeed, one can say that the book is fundamentally not about ethnic Chinese, but about a form of flexible transnational practice that has come about as well-

98

heeled migrants confront both the opportunities and challenges of different countries as ideal sites for either/both economic and cultural accumulation.

In the US and Europe, the book has been well-received for a variety of reasons. Perhaps it has to do with my breaking free of structural frameworks and to study the mobile, strategic practices of migratory capital-bearing actors. I had been influenced by David Harvey's concept of flexible accumulation but felt that flexible strategies of accumulation were not limited to corporate institutions. All kinds of migrants have become highly mobile and are flexibly tapping into a variety of markets for investment and sites of political refuge. Students are attracted to my practice-centered approach as a new way of conducting multi-sited ethnographic research. By following the strategies of some elite migrants, the study specifies how people navigate shifting geopolitical and economic spaces in search of both wealth and security, and in the process came to manipulate the immigration systems of different countries. Europeans are extremely interested in the concept of flexibility in the practice of citizenship, in an analytical approach that unpacks the idea of citizenship as a bundle of elements and practices that have become influenced by free flowing global capital.

One of my colleagues doesn't like the term flexible citizenship because for her, citizenship is an already fixed political-legal status. But others appreciate that the whole notion of citizenship is being inexorably transformed by globalized markets, the relentless flows of people across borders, and the premium put on human capital. This work has led me to further formulate a theory of how citizenship has become unraveled as some features of belonging become associated with the neoliberal focus on skills and entrepreneurialism.

Singapore is of course a great example of a situation whereby skilled expatriates are in some ways preferable to regular citizens because a critical mass of talented people is needed to sustain the growth of a knowledge economy. The entrepreneurial nature of the Singapore state has permitted a loosening of some criteria and obligations of citizenship to be influenced by neoliberal elements. But while male citizens in Singapore continue to serve the army (a critical component of citizenship), expatriates enjoy citizenship-like privileges and benefits. Thus, the opportunities and rights that one used to associate with political citizenship is now extended to highly mobile skilled workers, largely because of the neoliberal drive of the government to be globally competitive. This pro-expatriates policy puts pressure on citizens to adopt the new norms of self-improvement and self-entrepreneurship. In other words, neo-liberal criteria come to articulate citizenship without necessarily dismantling the legal aspects. This development also means that Singapore citizens are as free as anyone else to take their human capital elsewhere where they can expect higher returns for their skills. So the links of the citizens to the nations-states are becoming attenuated by market conditions that foster the circulation of human capital regardless of national borders or the migrants' original citizenship (see *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 2006).

VS: These are exciting ideas. How are they received in American academia?

AO: I have been contacted by people in disciplines ranging from architecture to social work who say that my work brings something new to their fields. My approach explores how, outside of universalizing Modernization or Marxian theories, researchers can develop an analytical approach for studying the emergence of particular yet globalized situations. Instead

of assuming that there is a singular causality or mechanism that instantiates uniform conditions in vastly different sites, the assemblage angle allows us to track the specific interactions of global and situated elements that are constitutive of a space of emergence. Different logics are in play – say tradition, or ethics and technology – that do not necessarily become undone or displaced in the mix. Globalized contexts of possibility, heterogeneity, and problematization are both distinctively situated and globally connected.

VS: What do you see the value that Anthropology brings to understanding of the contemporary world? Given that Anthropology is embedded in all these stereotypes and its connection with a tribal world, pre-modern world, what could/would Anthropology bring to the table?

AO: I remember a dismissive statement by Anthony Giddens about anthropologists studying dead people in dead societies. My rebuttal would be that in a globalized world, all 'pure' cultures are dead but peoples from dismantled old worlds are very much alive, living in very complex globalized environments. It is our job to come up with concepts that are adequate for studying different milieus and how highly variable conditions of possibility put at stake what it means to be human.

The contemporary is always a complex mix of the old and the new and a variety of things from (delete near) near and far interacting with one another in shaping our contemporary milieus. A key aspect of this perspective is that we are always dealing with emerging situations that we are not yet sure are going to stabilize into enduring structures and institutions. This means we try to stay close to unfolding events and be alert to contingency,

without making extravagant claims about structures and epochs. I think anthropologists are trying to do something very difficult which is basically to stay as close to practices as possible and investigate how people in very different milieus are confronted with different conditions of possibility for shaping desires, hopes and dreams.

Instead of hegemonic claims about the uniform effects of globalization, Anthropology can contribute more situated and precise analyses of the predicaments of contemporary human life and living. I try for instance to analyze the neoliberal not as a totalizing state (government or social condition), but as a migratory technology that can be taken up in very different political contexts such as China (*Privatizing China, Socialism from Afar,* 2008). An Anthropology of the contemporary seeks to investigate a particular milieu that is situated yet international, particular yet globalized, and subject to uncertainty.

VS: How do you locate your current research on bioethics and anthropology of science? Do you see this emphasis as following on from your view on what Anthropology needs to do in the present?

AO: Anthropology is really the study of how cultures and knowledges define what it means to be human in a particular context. This means that in a globalized world, anthropologists and scientists are also involved in shaping truth claims about the human in different domains of human action. From the early years of the discipline, anthropologists have looked to culture, poetry, agricultural techniques, or religious practices for an understanding of how human beings shaped their own cultural universe and sense of being human. The life sciences is a very contemporary technology that is rapidly changing the way we see ourselves as

102

globalized but situated human beings. So for me, it is very exciting (and also scary) to investigate how biomedical research and development are redefining human values and what being human means.

VS: How did you come to this interest from your earlier work?

AO: My interest in mobile global forms, e.g. neoliberal logic, foreshadows an interest in scientific technologies that promise to redefine, in different places, what we can become. I have been coming to Singapore every year for the last decade and I observe this emergence of the 'Biopolis' complex. California of course has many biotech institutions but somehow biomedical initiatives did not attract me as a research project until I saw this very explicit attempt by Singapore. I have a sense that some aspect of what it means to be Asian, of Asian-ness, are being redefined in the course of life science research and drug discovery.

VS: Is this new for Anthropology or are there any previous works on this?

AO: Well a number of important books on biotechnology and bioethics have been done. One thinks of Sheila Jasanoff, Donna Haraway, Margaret Lock, Emily Martin and many others in the fields of Medical Anthropology and Medical Sociology. I draw inspiration from them, but my orientation takes me in a somewhat different direction.

My interest stems from Foucault, the whole Foucauldian idea of bio-power, in governmentality, in the importance of knowledge-power in constituting the human, now at the cellular level. The Biopolis-related constellation crystallizes for me a series of questions

103

that have been posed in a different way in the U.S. In California, stem cell research has raised a lot of ethical objections and about individual rights of the patient, the medical consumer, the experimental subject and the fetus and so forth. These issues have inspired vigorous debates and public input. In Singapore and other Asian sites, it seems to me other kinds of ethical considerations are in play. I suspect that the life sciences are not the same everywhere given the different political ethical, and scientific factors in play in any one situation.

The life sciences are loose upon the world and you know we are going to have a different kind of life sciences that's going to come out of Asia. In about 10 to 20 years, the biomedical sciences that come out of China are going to have a different composition and orientation. India has some of the same reservations about biomedical research as in the West, but also great excitement about generic drugs for improving medical access among the poor.

VS: Do you see yourself staying in this field for some time or do you have already a next project that you are looking towards?

AO: Oh I don't know, I have barely begun writing…. I just completed a co-edited book *Asian Biotech* but I am now in a different place than that book. My tendency is to let objects find me. I encounter something intriguing and I think, 'I am going to investigate and see what this is about and where it is going.' By querying contemporary life problems in action and in motion, we may discover ethical, social and political dilemmas we haven't yet encountered.

VS: Great, we look forward to having you back here Aihwa. Thank you very much.