

Ethics and Social Sciences: A Gandhian Experiment

Sanil.V

Department Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
New Delhi -110016, India

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Abstract: This paper argues that Gandhi's claim enables us to rethink the epistemology of both social and natural sciences. Laws of sciences are not pictures or descriptions of stable islands of totalities of nature or society. They affirm a de-totalised and contingent reality within which cognitive and moral adventures are undertaken. The conceivability of natural-social laws allows us to put social sciences beyond the positivist and hermeneutical frameworks.

The paper also discusses the responses of western thinkers like Rousseau, Voltaire and Kant to the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 to bring out the alternative path taken by Gandhi. This discussion will also enable us to understand Foucault's diagnosis about social sciences. He claims that Modern Western reason is essentially practical reason and the primacy of practical reason and the ontology of human finitude it implies rend ethics impossible. Social sciences, according to him, are "grotesque" epistemic formations that make use of the gap left by an absent ethics. This paper argues that Gandhi offers a proposal to think about the knowledge about society beyond the epistemological configuration of social sciences.

1. Introduction

On 15 January 1934, the province of Bihar in India suffered a terrible earthquake. It killed around 30000 people and caused widespread damage over an area extending up to Nepal. Following this disaster Gandhi visited the state and remarked that the earthquake was a divine chastisement for the practice of untouchability. Through this remark Gandhi linked moral failure with a natural disaster. The victims of the earthquake did not suffer for their own sin. They suffered for the all our sins. This "our" included not only the contemporaries of the disaster but all those, who, down the centuries, practiced untouchability.

The great reverence in which Gandhi was held did not prevent his contemporaries from criticizing the rationale of his comment. Rabindranath Tagore, the poet laureate was one among them. He wrote a rejoinder challenging Gandhi's statement and sent it to Gandhi with a covering letter. In the letter he wrote:

The press reports that you in a recent speech referring to the recent earthquake in Bihar spoke as follows, ' I want you, to be superstitious enough (sic) to believe with me that the earthquake is a divine chastisement for the great sin we have committed against those whom we describe as Harijans.' I find it difficult to believe it. But if this is your real view on the matter, I do not think it should go unchallenged.¹

In his rejoinder to Gandhi that was published in *Harijan* on 14th February Tagore said

It has caused us painful surprise to find Mahatma Gandhi accusing those who blindly follow their social custom of untouchability for having got down God's vengeance upon certain parts of Bihar, evidently specially selected for his desolating displeasure! It is all the more unfortunate because this unscientific and materialistic view of things is too readily accepted by large sections of our countrymen. I keenly feel the indignity of it when I am compelled to utter the truism that physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in a certain combination of physical facts. Unless we believe in the inexorableness of universal laws in the working of which God himself never interferes, imperiling thereby the integrity of His own creation, we find it impossible to justify His ways on occasion like the one which has so sorely stricken us in an overwhelming manner and scale.²

Tagore criticizes Gandhi for inappropriately linking the casual and moral orders. Physical events have their origin in other physical events. They are covered by causal laws and not by ethical principles. God who created the universe and also its laws does not interfere with the causal order. The law of gravitation does not respond to moral callousness. "When such callousness accumulates the moral foundations and not the terrestrial ground which cracks." In fact such tragic events happen because god permits physical causes to unfold without interfering with them. Only the inexorableness of natural laws explains how there could be suffering in a world that is created by God. A God who intentionally creates such calamities and causes the suffering of innocent people in order to give us moral instruction must be morally inferior to human beings. Even we human beings do not indulge in such sadistic moral pedagogy. Such examples only create fear in the minds of the pupils. Our sins cannot bring creation down to ruins. Instead, according to Tagore, we can count on creation. This faith is the ground of our moral action. Tagore wonders, how can Gandhi who taught us fearlessness resort to such fearsome modes of moral teaching?

Gandhi in his response published in *Harijan* refused to retract his remark. He insisted that when he spoke about the link between earthquake and untouchability he spoke with deliberation and from his heart. The connection between the earthquake and sin is not mere example or a thought experiment proposed for moral pedagogy. He believed that if physical phenomena produce psychic and spiritual effects then the converse also must be true. "Visitations like droughts, floods, earthquakes and the like, though they seem to have only physical origins, are, for me, somehow connected with man's morals"³. The connection between the physical and moral orders is a metaphysical one. He instinctively felt that such a connection existed though he could not explain the "how" of this connection. The earthquake was no caprice of god or the result of the meeting of blind forces. According to Gandhi, we do not know all the laws governing such phenomena. God is not a separately existing person who works with these laws. He is not a slave of the laws he himself has created. He is the law itself. Hence the inexorableness of the law. Though the earthquake was a punishment of God, the latter is not a judge dispensing retributive justice. God is not a cruel teacher who resorts to brutal means for teaching us his own laws.

However, Gandhi readily accepted the possibility that someone could see the earthquake as a punishment not for practicing untouchability but as a punishment for Gandhi's crime of preaching against untouchability. Gandhi affirmed his total conviction in the existence of a law linking the physical and the moral. However he admitted that the content of the law could be read in a manner opposite to that of his own reading. We know only a tiny part of the divine law, and there too, we could very well be mistaken. The falsity of the belief would not make it into a superstition. The difference between knowledge and superstition does not lie in the truth of our beliefs. It lies in the nature of the subjective life within which such a belief is formed and nurtured. What are the practical consequences of this indissoluble marriage between matter and spirit? The idea of punishment makes sense only from the stand point of a moral agent who is prepared to undertake repentance and self purification. For Gandhi this belief in the link between earthquake and untouchability is a call to repentance and self purification. Even if his belief has turned out to be

false it could still have achieved the above objectives. Some one who uses the belief in the connection between cosmic phenomena and sin to judge and castigate one's opponents will be degrading their belief into a superstition. When used as a criteria this law becomes a superstition. What about someone who does not see any link at all? Missing such an opportunity to learn a moral lesson from an event would be a "terrible" thing.

We moderns refuse to see any metaphysical connection between natural disasters and human moral conduct. Natural science is expected to provide us with the knowledge of the laws which explain natural disasters in terms of natural causes. The link between natural events and moral action can only be symbolic. Against this Gandhi insists on a connection that is both metaphysical and symbolic. He insists on a necessary relationship between the earthquake and untouchability. Since this law links the suffering caused by the earthquake and a moral evil it is symbolically relation and offers the ground for undertaking moral self purification. However, modern ethics which maintains a gap between fact and value refuses to endorse this move from natural law to moral action.

To understand Modernity's ethical response to natural disasters we shall consider another earthquake which hit Lisbon in 1755. Interestingly at least three major modern thinkers – Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant – made it an explicit object of reflection.

Gandhi's claim about the law like relation between mind and matter challenges the epistemological and ontological distinctions between natural and social sciences. Natural sciences give us causal laws. Social Sciences make sense of our symbolic life. Gandhi insists that of mind can affect matter and matter can mind affect mind too. Even those who accept the identity between mind and matter have refused to accept the possibility of psychophysical laws. Gandhi seeks law like connections across matter, mind and society. Though Gandhi linked the evil of untouchability with the suffering caused by the earthquake, he refused to follow the social sciences and seek the root of untouchability in the caste system. He urged us against seeking deep causes of social evils. This was one of the points of contention between Gandhi and Ambedkar for whom untouchability was established and sustained by a hierarchical caste system. Gandhi's refusal to undertake a deep interpretation of untouchability has been seen as part of his defense of the caste system. Perhaps clarity about the nature of the connection Gandhi draws between the earthquake and untouchability could enable us to understand the challenge he posed to social sciences and also to the relationship between the knowledge and action.

2. Western Response to Natural Disasters

Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was perhaps one of the first major disasters of the modern west. Apart from the damage it caused to life and property it made an impact on the way modern western man looked at natural events. It became a topic for philosophical, scientific, moral, religious and administrative discussions. It is not that, not so long ago, other disasters of comparable magnitude did not happen outside Europe. Though Sicily and Jamaica suffered major earthquakes in 1693, they did not shake the conscience of Europe. Lisbon was the fourth largest city of Europe next only to London, Paris and Naples. It was a center of business and also of the Inquisition. The earthquake hits Lisbon on the morning of November 1st when most of its inhabitants were attending the mass. Around 70,000 people died and only 3000 of the 20,000 buildings survived. Even the royal palace was destroyed. A major fire followed the quake and completed the destruction.⁴

As expected many read this event as a message, lesson or punishment. For the Jansenists it was god's punishments to the jesuits. Protestants saw this as god's wrath against continuing the Inquisition in Portugal. Some saw it as a warning against the underpreparedness of the city in meeting disasters and as a call for exploring the causes which could be compatible with the idea of god as the first cause. Lisbon disaster was perhaps first disaster where the state took the responsibility for the post-quake reconstruction⁵.

In the 18th century Europe was already undergoing several seismic changes in its intellectual, cultural and political spheres. Enlightenment had already started challenging traditional knowledge and values. The birth of experimental science and an open public sphere for rational deliberation had begun to change the self image of western man. The earthquake posed a challenge to this image and attracted responses from the three most important thinkers of European enlightenment – Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant.

The pre-enlightenment man thought that he could get a glimpse into the plans of God. Out of the many possible worlds God created this one because it is good and this world is good because it is created by a god who combines wisdom with goodness. How is evil possible in this best of all worlds? Man contracted evil by succumbing to the original sin. Evil visits us in the suffering caused by natural disasters and also the sinful acts of men. As Leibniz said "One single Caligula, one Nero has caused more evil than an earthquake"⁶. However, this evil does not violate god's design nor should it challenge our faith. Natural disasters do not violate the laws of nature laid down by God. They only indicate the limits of our knowledge. The evil too does not violate god's plans. It indicates our finiteness. Enlightenment reason, however, gave up the claim to know God and affirmed a more radical version of human finitude. It claimed that we can affirm our finiteness without taking god's infiniteness as a measure. The optimism of man cannot be founded on any prior guarantee about the good nature of the world.

This was the basis of Voltaire's aggressive campaign against the theologically founded optimism of European man. In 1756 Voltaire published *Poem On The Lisbon Disaster; Or An Examination Of The Axiom. "All is Well"*.⁷ In 1759 Voltaire published *Candide*, which takes up the question of disasters in general and the Lisbon earthquake in particular. *Candide* travels around the world and witnesses the hopeless suffering of mankind. Earthquake hits Lisbon the day he reaches the city. Voltaire makes him wonder, 'If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others?'⁸ Voltaire questioned the prevalent optimism and insisted on the ungrounded necessity of suffering. His first poem on Lisbon earthquake was sent to Rousseau. Rousseau did not share Voltaire's lack of faith and optimism and wrote him a reply⁹. Rousseau believed that man has a role to play even in natural disasters. Disasters are a function of our knowledge and not ignorance. We construct thickly populated cities and invite disasters. Had we lived close to nature without high-rises, earthquakes would not have been so damaging. Man makes himself vulnerable to disasters. When earthquakes occur much damage is caused by the greed and selfishness of people who wouldn't leave their possessions to take shelter. Rousseau shared Voltaire's rejection of the use of religious explanations to make sense of the absurdities of human life. However for him this very groundlessness contains the seed of optimism. He found hope in our ability to be shocked by the earthquake and the bonds of solidarity formed in the aftermath of the disaster.

Kant too was shaken by the news of the Lisbon earthquake. He published three essays on this topic. In these essays we find the first efforts towards a scientific understanding of earthquake. He undertook meticulous examination of empirical data and proposed causal explanations. He tried to explain earthquakes in terms of the vapor bubbles that pass through the subterranean tunnels. These explanations turned to be false. However, he inaugurated a scientific turn in thinking about disasters by proposing a material force behind the aging of the world. Disasters happen as discontinuities with in this teleology.

Kant undertook the exploration of an earthquake because

The contemplation of such dreadful events is edifying [*lehrreich*]. It humbles man by showing him that he has no right, or at least that he has lost it, to expect convenient consequences only from the laws of nature, which God has ordered, and he also perhaps learns in this manner to perspect [*einsehen*]: that this arena [*tummelplatz*] of his desires ought not equitably to contain the aim of all his views¹⁰.

Disasters speak to men. They symbolize human finitude. They compel man to see nature as an interconnected unity. Knowledge of the laws of nature can give us the illusion that we could predict and control the entire nature. Natural disasters puncture this confidence by introducing an irreducible gap between knowledge and desire. Some see natural disasters as God's punishment for the sin of men. This judgment is of "blamable audacity" because it hopes to gain an insight into God's design and tries to interpret nature from God's stand point. No such insight is available to man. Man is infatuated so much with himself that he considers only himself as the sole object of the institutions of God, just as if these had no other aim than him alone, in order to regulate accordingly the measures in the government of the world.

Nature is worthy of being an object of divine wisdom. However, we should not delude ourselves by thinking that nature is prefabricated to suit our purposes or its events are meant to be directed as god's acts of vengeance or retribution. Natural events have a message to be interpreted by men. But it cannot be directly read off either from the stand point of man or from that of God. It demands a more complex hermeneutic enterprise. Innocents and faithful suffer at the hand of god whereas villains flourish.

Earthquake indicates to us that 'man is not born to build everlasting cottages upon this stage of vanity'. Man has a nobler aim and all these devastations and disasters are beautifully attuned to this aim. They teach man the lesson that the goods of nature can furnish no satisfactions for our inclination for happiness. The kingdom of man is not to be built upon this nature. Our world is that of freedom. That is our second nature and also our proper nature. In this sense these disasters constitute the indirect symbols of our moral destination. Human efforts to prevent disasters are meaningful, but their success cannot be measured on a human scale. A prince who is moved by the calamities of his people and tries to undertake measures to avert their miseries is a gift of god – a gift whose value is beyond all human measure.

Man's apprenticeship with nature receives a more positive characterization in the Critique of Judgment. Here Kant deals with the delight in terror that is seriously entertained.

"Bold, overhanging, and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piled up the vault of heaven, borne along with flashes and peals, volcanoes in all their violence of destruction, hurricanes leaving desolation in their track, the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force, the high waterfall of some mighty river, and the like, make our power of resistance of trifling moment in comparison with their might. But, provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime, because they raise the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace, and discover within us a power of resistance of quite another kind, which gives us courage to be able to measure ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature"¹¹.

In these cases, we look upon nature as something fearful without being afraid of it. We derive a negative pleasure in them provided we are secure from their danger. We can represent them with all their fury, provided, in reality, we are not threatened by them. Faced with earthquakes and hurricanes we can represent them to ourselves as if we wish to resist them, though in reality our resistance may be futile. The sublime object raises the forces of our soul above the heights of the vulgar commonplace, and we discover within us the power of resistance against the seeming omnipotence of nature. This power of resistance is not a blind faith in the ability of science and technology to control the universe. This stirs our own humanity whose powers listen to forces higher than that of a desire which reduces nature to a mere object of our happiness.

This feeling of pleasure-in-terror under security points out to us a non-sensuous standard within us which has 'infinity as one of its units in comparison with which everything in nature is small'. This makes us aware about our own faculty of estimating ourselves independent of nature. 'This saves humanity in our person from humiliation, even though as mortal men we have to submit to external

violence'. In front of the sublime object of terror, the mind makes itself sensible of the appropriate sublimity of the sphere of its own being, which is above nature. This is supra-sensible nature is the ontological ground of social sciences.

3. Gandhi: Ethics and the laws of Nature

Let us return to Gandhi's response to the earthquake. Ramachandra Gandhi, Gandhi's grand son and a philosopher tried to explain Gandhi's remark in the context of the theory of karma¹². Many interpret Karma as a mechanism of retributive justice which ensures that every one suffers the consequences of their action. You reap as you sow. You suffer in your old age because you hurt an old man when you were young. However, we see that, in the world around us, good people suffer and bad ones flourish. This can be explained by attaching a theory of rebirth to the theory of karma. In any of our lives we could be suffering the consequences of our action in previous births. This popular version for karma can be used to exhort people into action and also to counsel them not to worry about the consequences of action. It is also expected to render our moral life intelligible. According to Ramachandra Gandhi, Gandhi's remark about the link between the suffering caused by the earthquake and untouchability cannot be made sense within this popular conception of the karma.

In the rest of the paper I shall first explicate Ramachandra Gandhi's interpretation of the Theory of Karma. Then I shall try to expand this interpretation in the light of the contemporary discussions on the nature of the natural law. What is the nature of the law- like connection Gandhi demands between mind and matter and between the earthquake and untouchability?

According to Ramachandra Gandhi the suffering caused by events like earthquake hits us not because of its enormity alone but of their sheer meaninglessness or unintelligibility. What people suffer appears to us as hugely disproportionate to what they could possibly deserve under any imaginable notion of justice. Hence, our blanket ascription of innocence to victims. Such suffering makes us wonder if there is any fairness in this world. Ramachandra Gandhi calls such faith-annihilating suffering 'embarrassing suffering'. The arbitrariness and absurdity of suffering more than its intensity that make it embarrassing. The embarrassment unnaturally exceeds the pain caused by this suffering. The theory of karma is expected to address and not to destroy, fill up or conceal this faith destroying disproportionality between wrong doing and suffering. It is not that as a child I committed some sin and thereby got a get-me-in-the-end causal mechanism started which will eventually get hold of me in my old age and reward me with the punishment.

Theory of karma establishes a link between arbitrariness and absurdity of suffering on the one hand, and, on the other, the absoluteness of evil. Evil is absolute even if it is trivial. "I invite" this connection between embarrassing suffering and wrong doing. Many untouchables too suffered due to the earthquake. Many who practiced untouchability might have escaped unscathed. This unintelligible excess of suffering calls upon the evil as an explanation. This is the terrain of theodicy. Modern reason does not allow us to entertain the idea of evil as a causal agent. Practice of untouchability is a human wrong doing. Tagore claimed that moral wrong doing can only cause moral suffering like guilt and not earthquakes. However, Gandhi saw a causal connection between wrong doing and the suffering caused by the natural event. It is the unintelligibility of the suffering - absence of rational explanation - which confer causal powers on the wrong doing. To invite this connection one need not have practiced untouchability. It is enough if one lives in a society which practices untouchability and is capable of experiencing the irrationality of certain kinds of suffering.

Justice can be done to embarrassing and helplessness suffering only by linking the latter with a wrong doing which is trivial or crude. A more palatable or serious cause could be seen as undermining or trivialising the gravity of my embarrassing suffering. The proposal that Untouchability is a cause of earthquake sounds crude. This crudeness is essential for the causal link which is meant to initiate moral work. In a famous story a sage is burnt in the hell as a

punishment for him as a child torturing a fly. A child torturing a fly is too trivial a cause for burning someone in hell. The child might have indulged in torture as part of innocent play. Here the wrong doing is not a sufficient cause of suffering. However it is a sufficient explanation of the awkward and foundationless despair caused by embarrassing suffering. This despair invites the link between suffering and wrong doing.

This explanation does not make suffering intelligible. The embarrassing connection does not explain the degree and scale of suffering. It calls our attention to the foundationlessness of suffering. It does not undo the despair. Nor does it furnish us with counterfactuals like 'had we been not practicing untouchability, the earthquake would not have happened'. According to Ramachandra Gandhi, the link Gandhi draws explores and elaborates our embarrassment and prepares the ground for self purification.

Our moral work on ourselves has to be undertaken in a world in which strong connections between arbitrary and embarrassing suffering, and, crude and absolute evil exists. Such a world supplies the material for our ethical acts. We cannot make sense of our moral actions in terms of the deep causes of suffering. We need to follow the real, non arbitrary but "superficial" connections between suffering and evil.

Unlike many other social reformers, Gandhi did not search for the deeper causes of untouchability in Hindu religion, texts or in the socio economic conditions. Gandhi refused to link untouchability to the caste system. This was one of the points of contention between Gandhi and Ambedkar. For the latter, untouchability had its deep roots in the caste hierarchy. Untouchability cannot be eradicated unless we abolish the caste system. Gandhi did not favour the total abolition of caste system nor did he find such an abolition a necessary condition for removing untouchability. Let us for the moment keep aside Gandhi's reasons for continuing with the caste system. What is important is that he did not find any necessary connection between untouchability and the caste system.

Unlike the orthodox Hindu, Gandhi did not justify untouchability in any manner nor did he see it as an aberration from the ideals which sustained the caste system. The strong law- like connection he drew between wrong doing and suffering did not permit any such account of untouchability in terms of an avoidable gap between the ideal and the actual. He insisted that this heinous practice has no support in Hindu religion or Hindu philosophy. Here Gandhi made a radical move. For him untouchability had no deep root or hidden cause. A moral project against untouchability needed no support from an account of such deep level causes. Such a project would benefit more from tracking the surface level causal link between untouchability and natural disasters. Acceptance of this link immediately contracts us into undertaking the labor of self purification. Explanations of wrong doing in terms of its roots and deep causes have no such enabling potential. By giving gravity to the sin it diverts our attention to issues of retributive justice and punishment and thereby delay the commencement of acting on ourselves.

Ramachandra Gandhi insists on the foundationlessness of the connection between wrong doing and suffering. Wrong doing is not a sufficient cause for suffering. But the former is a sufficient explanation of the latter 'in a general way'. The instantiation of wrong doing " may not be vast but is absolute and sufficient to ground this deep disturbing misery in reality" ¹³. The moral person is called upon to recognise the groundless link between absoluteness of even trivial evil and the groundlessness of suffering. This connection is both symbolic and metaphysical. It is symbolic in the sense that each of the relata illustrates the other. It is metaphysical in the sense that it is a necessary connection. The connection illustrates a 'necessity of its own kind'. People who draw these connections "do not speak about subtle and long causal process; they simply insist on hard connections." This hard connection insists on necessity but this necessity does not deny the

groundlessness of embarrassing suffering which illustrates the absoluteness of even trivial wrong doing. The law affirms the necessity of the groundlessness of such links.

Ramachandra Gandhi's interpretation of the theory of karma demands a new understanding of the ideas of law and nature. For Gandhiji, nature included both matter and mind. The law of nature ranges over both mind and matter. Ramachandra Gandhi proposes that such a law which connects suffering with wrong doing does not explain away the groundlessness of suffering. This epistemological claim about a groundless psycho-physical law calls for a radical revision of the naturalist ontology of nature. Ramachandra Gandhi offers some promising but preliminary suggestions towards an understanding of the law of nature which does not accept the naturalist ontology of nature as a seamless totality.

According to Ramachandra Gandhi, the awkwardness we feel about suffering has its root in our ignorance or inability to make sense of the event. This is not merely an epistemological deficiency. This inability has its source in our finite nature. Suffering makes us question the naturalness of nature. Embarrassing suffering is not natural. It does not follow "naturally" from anything. Also, the embarrassment of suffering could "unnaturally" exceed the pain.

Suffering involves self-doubt. The question 'why me?' accompanies suffering. Self-doubting is a manifestation of our ontological finitude. Doubt is not a temporary interlude which thinking will get over in its march towards certainty. Skepticism uses doubt as a fortunate occurrence upon which we can elaborate a positive practice of thinking. We should ask an ontological question here: how could there be a doubting, embarrassing, suffering being in the order of Being? Self doubt is destructive. A nature that harbors self doubt cannot be immutable, limitless or infinite. According to Ramachandra Gandhi, the extreme concentration of being or singularity formed in self doubt is a hole in the ever outpouring, productive and expanding nature. This hole - in-pouring of being - into which we withdraw in our awkward moments shows that nature is not as seamless as the naturalists would think. However this ontological insight does not yield any room for the self-confidence of the non naturalist in the reality of the infinite non corporeal soul. As the doubt harboring part of nature, our non-corporeality is finite. For Ramachandra Gandhi this awkward combination of finiteness and non-corporeality is at the heart of the problem of evil and embarrassing suffering.

Gandhi claimed that if matter can influence mind then mind could influence matter too. He found a lawful connection between the mental world of moral considerations and the natural world of earthquakes. Davidson argued that lawful connection between mental and physical types is untenable. Mental concepts are inextricably meshed with other concepts of our meaningful life-world. Gandhi circumvented this difficulty. The law connects events which no longer make sense to us. Causal relation is established between events described in a certain way. The law of karma invites our attention from beneath the threshold of meaning.

Unnatural suffering indicates the unnaturalness of nature. Presence of suffering, self doubt and evil rebels against the concept of nature as a totality. Ramachandra Gandhi argues that law of karma presupposes the non-totalisability of nature. Natural laws cannot explain the whole nature because the idea of "whole nature" is untenable. No protophysics that can secure the totality of nature in a priori manner can explicate the meaning of natural law. The 'self doubting I' actualises this impossibility of totalisation. How can we explicate the meaning of natural law while freeing nature from the transcendental condition of being a whole? As Kant argued, it is only a finite being who has no immediate access to reality in itself, needs to undertake his finite cognitive activities under the projected totality of the world of appearances. The law of Karma by giving up this totality announces a more radical finitude of the knowing subject. Self purification is undertaken by such a radically and embarrassingly finite subject. How can a finite subject know hard connections in a non-totalised nature? In what sense are these connections necessary?

According to Hume, we have no rational grounds for attributing necessity to casual connections. On observing that event A has so far been followed by event B, our mind, out of habit, forms a belief in a necessary causal link between A and B. We have no reason to hold that causal laws discovered by science would continue to operate in future. However, the principle of sufficient reason states that there must be a reason for this world to be the way it is and not otherwise. For Hume there is no such reason or we cannot come to know about such a reason.

Hume's critic would say that we know that these laws have been valid until date. Had there been no reason which grounds this necessity and these laws were arbitrary then we would have had at least some cases which violated these laws. If the laws are arbitrary, it is high time, this arbitrariness showed up.

Kant's conditional rebuttal of Humean skepticism was based on the impossibility of thinking the necessity of chance. He argued that causality is necessary in so far as we take the world as a totality of facts represented by a consciousness. Events can be represented only in so far as they belong to such a totality and stand in causal relationship with other events. Even to undertake Hume's thought experiments about the Billiard balls, we need to hold onto the constancy of balls, tables, surfaces, space etc. If you are a realist about these objects then you are already committed to the reality of more than mere regularities. In so far as we know the laws of nature, we know them as necessary.

Of course, we can know chance but as probability. Calculation of probability demands that we know all the possible outcomes. Out of the many possible outcomes only some are realized. We can represent chance as probability in so far as we know the totality of all possibilities.

We have seen that according to Ramachandra Gandhi the law of Karma rejects the idea of nature as a totality. Kant, argues that without the idea of totality we cannot make sense of both necessity – understood as constancy of laws – and also chance – understood as probability. The karmic law which connects untouchability and earthquake claims necessity without any observable regularity.

Quintin Meillassoux has shown the way for radicalising Humean scepticism regarding causal laws by thinking through the necessity of chance while giving up the principle of sufficient reason and the idea of totality. Meillassoux distinguishes between contingency and chance. Chance can be calculated as probability. For example we can calculate the probability of a six-faced dice to land up with a certain face up. Each face is the actualisation of an indexed set of possibilities. This totalised possible contains only half cooked actualities which could all be realised in principle, though only a few are actualised in reality. Contingency, unlike chance, is not an actualisation of a pre-conceived totality of the possible. It is "the property of an indexed set of cases (not of a case belonging to an indexed set) of not itself being a case of a set of sets of cases"¹⁴. Meillassoux argues that contingency cannot be thought within the metaphysics of the possible. It is not a thought about change of becoming. We cannot think contingency by superimposing the thought about what actually is upon the thought about the other thing it could have been. Contingency is not the relative unpredictability of outcomes or future behaviour.

Meillassoux argues that to think about contingency as distinct from chance is to think of the possible without totalising over the all-possible cases. According to him, we have two means at our disposal for determining a universe of all possible cases - experience and mathematical construction. Experience is no use here because only a Leibnizian God can survey all possible cases. However, mathematical construction provide a negative proof against the totality of all possible cases. Cantor's theory shows that the infinity is multiple. It is impossible to foreclose the multiplicity of infinities. It establishes the unclosed pluralisation of the infinite quantities. We can see that both experience and mathematics furnishes only negative proofs against the totality of all cases. Cantor's theory establishes that conceivable is not necessarily totalisable. For Meillassoux only mathematics furnishes a positive instance of thinking without totalisation.

Can the finite being experience the possible as non-totalisable? I would claim that the necessary connection between evil and suffering experienced by the finite being is one such instance. In Ramachandra Gandhi's interpretation, Self doubt and embarrassing suffering are instances of such an experience where one manifests the hole in the order of being. According to Ramachandra Gandhi, nature is not "everything" in so far as there are embarrassed or doubting souls. They are ontological cracks. They are the sites where the groundlessness of being shows up. Embarrassed or doubting souls announce the limit of totality or ontological closure. The suffering being attests to the ontological claim that the nature is not All. The natural law symbolically illustrates the metaphysical absence of such a totality. Here the law is not a representation of a stable universe. In thinking the law the finite subject, seizes contingency. He inhabit the possibility that law could have been otherwise. He can subject himself to transformations which cannot be conceived as a change between representable stages.

The medium for the chancy occurrence of natural necessity is matter or force. What could be the medium for the necessity of chance? Matter, object, states etc are bad candidates for this medium. The only medium I can think of is Truth. As we said contingency cannot be known by the possible outcomes. However, it is registered by the way its strikes. It is its effect. Its causes do not pre-exist the effect. Its causes are compossible only post facto. In this sense contingency as effect is absolutely primary. It is prior to that which is. Only truth can claim such an absolute primitivity. Gandhi's insistence on the primacy of truth – his inversion of the God as truth to truth as god – encourages us to think in this direction.

Interestingly Ramachandra Gandhi draws an analogy between wrong doing and logical contradiction. A contradiction that creeps into a formal system will produce an embarrassment somewhere or other, sooner or later. Likewise, wrong doing has to show up, sometime or other, by causing embarrassing suffering. The analogy does not lie in the fact that a contradiction when uncovered is an embarrassment to the logical system. Instead, it indicates the similarity between the way wrong doing leads to suffering and the way a contradiction is eventually exposed. We have argued that the law like relationship between evil and suffering affirms the necessity of its contingency. Does such a relationship hold between contradiction and its eventual showing up?

Law of non contradiction is foundational for classical logic. Any thing can be derived from a contradiction. A single contradiction entails everything, including all other contradictions leading to trivialism. If a contradiction is permitted then no one could deny anything. Rational belief is closed under entailment and if someone believed a contradiction then he ought to believe in everything¹⁵. In logic this is known as explosiveness. Paraconsistent logic avoids this by stipulating against explosiveness. It grants specific contradictions and does not allow them to entail all contradictions. These logicians rejects the law of non contradiction but accepts the law of excluded middle. P and $\text{not-}P$ are both true but there are no other third possibility. The intersection between true and false is not empty. There are three kinds of paraconsistent logicians. The weak paraconsistent position sees the rejection of the law of non contradiction only as a tool and does not accept any real possibility of a true contradiction. The strong version of paraconsistency accepts that true contradiction is a real possibility. However it does not grant that any actual contradiction is true. An extreme version dialethic – accepts true contradiction in reality. The logical world of Gandhi could be that of a strong paraconsistency. It does not rule out all contradictions. True contradictions are real possibilities. In the actual world the contradictions will get exposed. These are contingent events. Nothing about the gravity of wrong doing or the contradiction can apriori determine when and where they get exposed. Hitherto unexamined and unrecognized wrong doings will surface in future holding us guilty. When that happens we cannot wriggle out of the responsibility by claiming that we were not party to the wrong doing. Nor we can re-trace our involvement in the crime. At the level of possibility we are at once absolutely innocent and absolutely guilty – until the hand of fate strikes us.

Let us look at the Ramachandra Gandhi analogy between meaningless suffering and the exposure of contradiction. It is not that you can't hide a contradiction from all people for all the time and its logical necessity would precipitate it. As we know there is no causal mechanism which necessarily connects wrong doing with suffering. The law of karma can sustain the moral work of a free subject in so far as contingency rules over that law. For Gandhi the law connects earthquake with untouchability. For his opponents the law connects earthquake with the opposition to untouchability. In both the projects the respective law could turn out to be otherwise than it is. In both the cases law is not the representation of a stability which exists out there in nature. So the possibility of either of them comparing their law against a law abiding world or against each other's law does not arise. In other words, both of them while doing their moral work based on their respective laws wouldn't encounter a world in which real contradiction exists.

4. Conclusion

Gandhi claim opens up a new logic of the social sciences. We have argued that the link he proposes between mind the natural and the social is immediately cognitive. It is not meant to be subjected to a hermeneutics. It is at once an ethical claim and a statement of law like the laws of natural law, provided we understand the idea of natural law as the law of a de-totalised nature. Such ontology of nature overcomes the distinction between nature and culture and between fact and value.

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