Development, Ethics and the Ethics of Nationalism

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Development, Ethics and the Ethics of Nationalism

In a world which exhibits so much power and yet does so little to drive back underdevelopment, it is not to be wondered if the thinking endeavour is shrouded with the impression of being confronted with the greatest enigma, with the most disconcerting sphinx of all times. However, concerning this most pressing and controversial issue of underdevelopment, of all the disciplines which study man, philosophy is the one which until now said the least. Is this due to simple insensitiveness, or to pure neglect, or to the feeling of not being directly concerned? Whatever the reasons may be, the simple fact that philosophy has very little to say regarding this colossal human tragedy, not only does not in the least render it innocent, but most of all, puts a question mark on it. This way of shunning the real world is surely puzzling for a theoretical discipline such as philosophy.

But so harsh a judgement will undoubtedly appear as being inopportune if it were to be shown that the main reason which kept philosophy aloof from the issue of underdevelopment stems from a seemingly epistemological objection. At first sight, to mark off in the topic of underdevelopment an area of real philosophical concern does not seem feasible indeed. Underdevelopment understood as a mere failure of development appears to be within the compétence of the various disciplines of the social sciences, especially of économies, rather than that of philosophy. Viewed as a technical problem, it could thereby be declared outside the sphere of direct philosophical inquiry.

But when one reads the works of those economists, sociologists, and anthropologists, who have dealt with the problem of development and underdevelopment, in their very disputes and lurchings, the idea that, behind the technical issues, a question which looks like a philosophical issue is entrenched, steadily comes to light. This idea is no sooner accepted than it hints to a way of possible salvation, the remarkable feature of which is that it is fraught with spiritual ticklings rather than technical devices. Just as when all available means fail to provide a solution, one starts to rely on one's creative will, so does the man who decides to view the problem of underdevelopment from the philosophical perspective. He soon finds himself gazing at a depth of ethical frame with summoning echoes, so different from the sirens of modernization and collectivisation. This paper is precisely pointing in such a direction: it is marked out by the gradual metamorphoses of development issues into ethical questions and by the growing suspicion that the theoretician of development may end up by becoming a moralist.
The Encounter of Traditional Ethical Views with Theories of Economic Growth

All philosophical textbooks, treatises and essays dealing with social life, directly or indirectly, feel compelled to lay out the confrontation between moral values and economic life. The confrontation is usually evolved under the heading: "the moral problems of economic life". We are thus exposed to a series of moral judgements which, as is right and proper of an ethical standpoint, lend themselves to positive as well as to negative evaluations.

Accordingly, it is generally admitted that in helping raise man's material power, industrialization has done a good deal for his perfectibility, for the development of his potentialities by greatly reducing the hindering effects of poverty, disease, and protracted subordination to natural forces. Moreover, the fact that the economic achievement which made industrialization possible was followed, or was accompanied, or even, as some would say, was caused by a democratic outburst which dissolved feudal restrictions could not but arouse a general consensus equating industrialization, if not with the triumph, at least with a significant advancement of the values of equality, justice and freedom. The consensus is such that, like the moralist, when economists and sociologists study the transition from traditional society to modern or industrialized society, they too note, in association with industrialization, the "rise of the democratic political community". Hence the conclusion that for economic growth to be possible the practice of assigning economic roles by ascription, or according to status, must be replaced by the standard of achievement.

It is not to be wondered, then, if the detection of a moral advancement in the modern world ushered in optimistic views as regards the future of humanity. The advent of industrialization made history meaningful to the extent that, henceforth, it could be conceived as the process of progress, as the irresistible move of humanity, however painful and tinged with crises, towards a general betterment. The various conceptions, ranging from liberalism to the diverse philosophies of history, including the Marxist one, have so largely popularized their faith in progress that we can venture to say that the purported bolstering effect of industrialization on morality was taken as a matter of fact.

Yet we cannot conceal the equally significant fact that, alongside this mounting optimism, reservations with discordant effects were no less expressed. To many moralists, growing industrialization reflected the ascending grip of greed on men, the tangible triumph of materialism over spiritual values, without mentioning those who frankly thought of ferreting out in the accumulation of wealth, as Balzac said, the secret of a "crime that has never been found out ..." The latter are indeed convinced that in order to become rich one must lie, flatter, deceive, expropriate, in a word transgress all accepted moral rules. Even sociologists, in the face of the breakdown of traditional relations, have expressed in various ways

2 Bert F. Hoselitz, Sociological Aspects of Economic Growth, Bombay, 1960, p. 19
the dire need for a new "authoritative moral order". The conflict between capital and labour – that which in ethical terms is called the social question and which hinges on the question of wealth distribution – hesitant though one may be in agreeing with the Marxist radicalization, is none the less a pertinent case illustrating the divorce between ethics and economic life. This hesitation, perhaps acceptable when confined to the wealthy centers, becomes frankly untenable when it contemplates the vast arrays of destitution that economists call the underdeveloped areas, and which so distinctly render world inequality palpable.

Still, however wide and acute the disharmony between ethics and economic life is judged to be, the overwhelming tendency was to stand up for optimism by keeping white-hot the idea of progress. More often than not each school of thought had its own ready-made solution. To the evils of capitalism and imperialism, Marxist thinking saw but one remedy: socialism, the only social organization in which growth and social justice would finally reconcile. Liberalism, clinging all the more to the idea of progress, not only did preserve its confidence as to the resolution of the social question in wealthy centers, but even predicted that human solidarity will help overcome backwardness in the rest of the world. Here and there the moral obligation of rich countries vis-à-vis the poor ones has been so emphatically asserted that, no doubt, it was taken as an integral part of contemporary consciousness.

Transcendent and external though moral judgements on economic life may seem to be, yet on two aspects they were touching at the very root of the mechanism of economic growth. We need only recall the characteristics by which economists and sociologists define and oppose traditional and modern societies to make the suggestion viable. And if one adds the experience of underdeveloped countries, the suggestion turns into an evidence.

Indeed, we saw that in defining the industrial society as an achieving one, theoreticians meant that it was based on merit rather than on status. This amounts to saying that economic development is unthinkable, at any rate cannot be sustained, without an overall democratic transformation of social life, the main elements of which are social mobility and social justice. Poverty is congenitally associated with injustice and lack of freedom. No better illustration of this connection can be found than in the persistence of poverty in underdeveloped areas. Liberal as well as neo-Marxist economists, though they diverge on the explanation, share the same view: what sustains underdevelopment is wide social inequality. Thus Parmar, noting the extremely polarized texture of underdeveloped areas, draws the conclusion that "instead of thinking of development as a process in which growth will automatically bring about social justice, it should be affirmed that social justice should be considered a necessary precondition of growth." As for neo-Marxists, poverty is but an effect; its real cause is inequality since, as one such scholar puts it, "increasing social inequality is the mode of reproduction of the conditions of externally oriented development."

4 Ian Roxborough, Theories of Underdevelopment, 1984, p. 12
6 Samir Amin, Unequal Development, Sussex, 1976, p. 352
Beyond differences in analysis, what is generally suggested is however unmistakable: there is no development without some kind of ethical viability. A society is likely to enter into the road of economic growth only if it manifests some propensity towards social justice, at least by reducing the deep-seated disparities. The main reason, so the argument goes, for the inability of underdeveloped countries is that, still tied up with traditional structures and values, they have as yet failed to promote a more open society. In other words, if indeed progress in morality either conditions or accompanies economic growth, may it not be inferred that ethical instances, far from restricting themselves to judgements on the effects of growth, constitute its necessary ingredients? Economic prowess would thus be inseparable from ethical soundness.

But this is not all that there is to be said. Neo-Marxist theories have emphasized the idea that traditional ascriptive societies are in truth maintained by imperialist powers. Preserving these societies as they are, so it is argued, is the best way of turning them into peripheries from which more surplus can be drained without any serious impediment. As the ruling circles of these societies will not fail to find their own interest in this economic towage, what is one to conclude if not that, to paraphrase Frank, in indigenous societies, "the principal enemy undoubtedly is imperialism, the immediate enemy is the bourgeoisie..." The special flavor of this approach springs from the presentation of economic development as something of which underdeveloped countries are deprived. It is, so to speak, a debarred right. Hence the belief that development is in the main the question of recovering this right. This in turn places development in the way of duty accomplishment.

The liberal position has, on the contrary, devised the theory of modernization which portrays the now developed nations as pioneers and models, and by the same token, the underdeveloped countries as lagging societies. Put in this way, economic growth assumes, in the eyes of underdeveloped countries, the characters of a goal to be achieved, in a word of a professed teleology. For these countries to follow the given models becomes an aspiration, better still a duty. For instance the effort to economize is the first obligation to which poor countries must comply, for as Lewis stated, if the said effort "is not made, either because the desire to economize does not exist, or else because either custom or institutions discourage its expression, then economic growth will not occur." In other words, since developed nations are living examples, what poor countries must do to arrive at the same level is fairly known. The root of the matter is rather on the side of the fulfilment of the necessary obligations by the underdeveloped countries. Thus it is because will has emerged at the forefront of development issues that, speaking of these countries, Rostow thought it justified to affirm: "...like other peoples at great moments of decision, their fate still lies substantially within their own hands." Where we were expecting the operation of objective laws, of a deterministic course, here is will occupying the central place!

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Now to be able to struggle for a right or to raise oneself to the level of a higher example, in short to accomplish the prescribed duty, no doubt, certain virtues will be necessary. For as in any moral problem, the difficulty does not lie so much in the intention or desire to do good as in the realizing act, in what ethics terms the will. But how does the will occur? The question is indeed difficult; but an indirect answer is maybe possible. If will does not come automatically, may it not be due to the presence of resisting elements? In thus alluding to what James has called "inhibitive power", are we not equating economic achievement with moral conduct resisting natural impulses? From external, good or bad, judgements on economic life we thus insensibly slip into the question of will, that is into the very question of the genesis of the economic agent. This result allows us to directly examine the issue, mainly by inquiring into the values that make up the virtue of the entrepreneur.

The Ethical Root of Economic Achievement

We owe to Weber the démonstration of the connection of economic achievement with a specific ethos. To underline his point, it is worthwhile discussing the general essence of ethics so as to elicit the subterranean anchorage of economic achievement in ethical impulse. We know that philosophers have proposed diverse and often incompatible ethical doctrines. Though the task may be a difficult one, this diversity need not prevent us from attempting to disclose, beyond differences, the underlying essence, that by which alone all these doctrines deserve the name of ethics. We may take as a guiding point the position of Blanshard according to which "any question is a moral question whose decision depends on a choice between values." A statement of this kind places the essence of ethics in the act of ordering or marshalling values. Neither the positing of values, nor the question of their origin would thus be the major concern of ethics. The proper essence of the latter sticks out only when a choice becomes imperative, when accordingly our judgement is solicited.

However, we cannot refrain from thinking that this approach is somewhat restrictive as it does seem to imply that morality appears essentially in a situation of crisis. It may even be argued that repeated appearances of crises suggest the presence of an hesitating rather than a determined will. As advised by Aristotle, what suits virtue most is to become "habit". The essence of morality would thus transpire, should we suggest that it lies in the act of establishing a hierarchy of values. Such a definition will give us the advantage of preserving the idea of choice while making exceptional the exclusively crisis-driven judgements. We thereby confer upon the choice the attribute of establishment, or, to speak morally, the virtue of loyalty.

That this analysis is impregnated with Nietzschean accents is equally noticeable. For what are we implying if not, as Nietzsche said referring to the morality of the philosopher, that it reflects "the order of rank the innermost drives of his nature

10 William James, Selected Papers on Philosophy, London/New York, 1961, p. 68
stand in relative to one another?" 12 But in thus speaking of rank, one is also pointing out to the kind of duplication to which man is subjected and in relation to which drives are classified in terms of higher and lower, in terms of one commanding and another obeying, or if you will, in terms of ends and means. It would seem as though, from some such phenomenon of commanding and obeying, will is properly arousing, for "a man who wills - commands something in himself which obeys or which he believes obeys." 13

The task of showing to what extent this approach to morality really corresponds to what ethical doctrines have in common can now be dealt with. Of course, it will not be possible to examine all these doctrines here in detail. Let it suffice to point out that the essential trends do come in agreement. Moreover, our task would be simplified, were we to accept, following Rader, that moral doctrines are either "teleological" 14 or "deontological" 15, that they are conceived either as a search for happiness or as a fulfillment of obligation. From the outset one may well reduce all morality to the deontological by arguing that happiness too is an obligation. But this will hide rather than reveal the idea of rank. The best proof would show that in all moral views there is the establishment of a rank between drives, be they deontological or teleological.

No particular difficulty is to be expected from the deontological ones. Whether we take the ethics implied in religious doctrines, or the morality of pure duty, as evolved by Kant, in both cases, the concern is the submission of sensuous drives to either what is believed to be divine rule or, as is the case with Kant, to pure rational principles. Our inquiry acquires a certain degree of complication when it encounters the doctrines of happiness, for in this case sensuous drives appear as the indispensable elements of happiness. The complication becomes undoubtedly greater as we go along with those views which, like the Epicurean or Utilitarian one, affirm categorically that the aim of ethics is "not something to be contradistinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself...". 16

As regards the search for happiness in the rationalist fashion, we need only refer to Plato’s view to observe that obedience of sensuous drives is also decreed as the very condition of happiness. After distinguishing the three parts in man, namely reason, spirit, and appetite, has not Plato defined the just man as the man in whom reason allied with spirit controls appetite? The just man is happy because “by keeping all three in tune, like the notes of a scale (high, middle, and low, or whatever they be), will in the truest sense set his house in order, and be his own lord and master and at peace with himself." 17

Interestingly enough, this same will of ranking emerges as the underlying spirit of Utilitarianism itself. It is already obvious with Epicurus: no sooner is pleasure termed as the “chief good” than specifically it is defined as “the freedom of the body from pain, and of the soul from confusion”. 18 Needless to say, this

13 Nietzsche, op.cit., p. 30
14 Melvin Rader, Ethics and the Human Community, 1964, p. 2
15 Op.cit., p. 3
18 Epicurus, The Classical Moralists, Boston/New York/Chicago, 1909, p. 113
freedom imposes on sensuous drives a selection and restriction of such nature that they must be content with the strict minimum. And what is one to conclude when Bentham, after declaring pain and pleasure as the "two sovereign masters" of mankind, indulges in a rational calculation ranking pleasures according to their degree of "fecundity" and "purity". In Utilitarianism, pleasure, although otherwise pursued as the chief aim, is yet so strictly graded hierarchically that the idea of morality as a phenomenon of commandment and obedience comes out rather reinforced.

Let us now take up our initial problem, namely the study of the connection between ethics and economic life in the intention of showing how, as a proof of the will only, economic achievement became possible. No need to go into abstruse considerations; economists themselves have largely echoed Weber’s idea of restraints on enjoyment as a condition of economic advancement. Thus Schweinitz notes that investment, which is a condition of economic growth, is the product of the "restriction of consumption, that is saving ...". In more general terms, we can say, following Wilber, that most economists, probably in opposition to Marx, have tended to analyze social surplus as "the result of an act of abstinence or waiting". However, this statement in no way should imply that Marxism had no consideration for the role of abstinence in economic progress. On the contrary, one can even hold the opposite view by displaying the austerity of Leninism which, as noted by a scholar, not only emphasized "diligence, punctuality, meticulousness of work, and economy of materials...", but by radically deferring consumption turned socialism into a future and thereby projected state of enjoyment.

In line with the question of the postponement of enjoyment, to broaden our understanding of the role of ethics, it may be of great help to recall Hegel’s profound analysis of labour. In his study of the relationship between master and slave, Hegel clearly shows that the slave is able to overcome his sensuous nature and thus to start having a will because he works for his master. "The slave", he writes, "in the service of the master, works off his individualist self-will, overcomes the inner immediacy of appetite, and in this divestment of self and in the ‘fear of his lord’ makes ‘the beginning of wisdom’ - the passage to universal self-consciousness." Even if labour is here taken in its forced form, it is none the less clearly spelt out that, as an activity, it would not have been possible without man having to serve something other than his own selfish appetite. From the idea of labour as a service to a master to the Weberian conception of economic achievement as a duty to a divine call, the transition is so direct that one can affirm that the Weberian thesis on the role of Protestantism in the emergence of capitalism constitutes an extension of Hegel’s view on the relationship between master and slave.

However, although economists have stressed the role of abstinence in economic

19 Jeremy Bentham, The Classical Moralists, p. 483
20 Bentham, op.cit., p. 497
21 Schweinitz, op.cit., p. 40
22 Charles K. Wilber, The Soviet Model and Underdeveloped Countries, 1972, p. 11
24 Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, Oxford, 1985, p. 175
growth, it cannot be said that they have remained faithful to the important factor of Weber's analysis, to wit the idea of call. For, as asceticism has always been advocated by moralists, the decisive question becomes that of knowing why the asceticism inspired by Protestantism alone led to economic achievement. As Weber sees it, in no way should the difference between ancient asceticism and Puritanism become a matter of doubt for in the latter "the only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling."25

In other words, unlike traditional ethics which proposed asceticism mainly because it despised possession as expression of greed, Puritanism advocated the acquisition of wealth as a duty while restricting its enjoyment. Wealth thus became the expression of the fulfilment of duty, the tangible proof of the elect who pleases all the more God as the restriction on enjoyment is imposed in the lap of opulence. As a proof of a call economic activity could grow into an enterprise, implying rational and rigorous methods and insatiability even by definition. Instead of being an adventure, that is the deployment of whatever means available to grab and accumulate, as mere greed would advise, acquisition of wealth could now be raised to the level of rational activity, and thus become an enterprise in the true sense of the word. Protestant ethics has introduced into the world of business a kind of Copernican revolution: such is the profound idea of Weber. Just as Thales instead of empirically measuring or mentally analyzing the triangle discovered the principle of demonstration by "a positive a priori construction",26 so did the Protestant ethics change the acquisition of wealth into a demonstration of a call such as it became a methodic and sustained activity.

Many social scientists, while recognizing the glaring merit of Weber's insight, have nevertheless criticized him, mainly by pointing out the particular, confined character of his explanation. Thus Hagen finds the thesis not persuasive in view of the fact that "by now we have had economic growth effectively led by Roman Catholics, Shintoists, Buddhists, adherents to the Orthodox Christian faith ... and avowed atheists ...".27 In assuming that the "events Weber discusses were probably only a special case of a much more general phenomenon...",28 McClelland too shows the same kind of reservation. Among the critics there are also those who think that Weber gave too much emphasis to religious events, thus neglecting "the importance of the social and political context in which such changes manifest themselves".29

When in this way theoreticians indicate that neither non-Protestant people nor even atheists were prevented from realizing economic success, it is to signify that the thesis of the causation of capitalism by a specific belief falls short by its very particularity. An ethic inspired by such a specific belief cannot provide a univer-

26 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, London/New York, 1969, p. 10
sal explanation, as it seems to bar similar conduct in people with different beliefs. As concerns those who accuse Weber of neglecting the social context, their objection is in a way similar since they are but demanding that the religious aspect be taken as an element in a more global phenomenon, as a particular reflection of a general move towards economic development. Hence our question: what is this general trend of which the Protestant ethics should be an aspect?

According to McClelland, the generality of the trend is characterized by a particular increase in the need for achievement. Through the impulse of a child-rearing system which emphasized self-reliance, the epoch was lifted up by a characteristic increase in the need for achievement. This psychological rather than religious explanation, while on the one hand it ensures that “the key characteristics of the Protestant Reformation was its emphasis on self-reliance”, on the other, being of a general nature, it renders possible the explanation of “economic development in ancient Greece, in modern Japan...”.

Hagen, for his part, proposes an explanation which gives more room to social conditions inasmuch as the need for economic achievement is surmised to intensify as a result of a withdrawal of status respect caused by the disruption of traditional social order. Those groups who have lost their previous status tend, in the long run, to evolve a creative or achieving personality which is none other than the expression of their desire to reconquer their position. They would rather select the economic field since as a rule, while being more open, it also leads to rapid social recognition. “The pressure of withdrawal of status respect”, writes Hagen, “on authoritarian parents will create a home environment leading to progressively increasing retreatism over a period of several generations. Out of this, still later, creative personality is apt to arise.”

The general approach is thus clear: it is to intimate that in a closed society, that is ruled by customs and traditions, innovation should be expected to come from people having a deviant personality. The special role that migrants have played in accelerating economic growth in various parts of the world could not but strengthen this idea. Migrants are not only those who are more apt to question traditional manners, but in their desire to assert themselves, they are also those with a conquering will. An observation such as this led Hoselitz to the view that “new forms of economic activity arise in connection with the behaviour of certain individuals who depart from traditional customs and practices.”

To summarize, then, we can say that all these theoreticians, while in the main agreeing with Weber’s idea of linking the emergence of capitalism with the appearance of a deviant personality, have endeavoured to give it a more universal dimension such as it would include the industrialization of those countries which had no Protestant background. Even if no general agreement is observable as to the cause of the deviant personality, there seems to be a consensus in the understanding that economic achievement is willed whenever people or groups of people, feeling either insecure or being effectively declassed, harbour the determination to preserve or conquer a higher social position.

30 McClelland, op.cit., p. 85
31 Ibid.
32 Hagen, On the Theory of Social Change, p. 200
33 Hoselitz, op.cit., p. 23
Need we stress the insufficiency of this explanation? For, why should deviant mentality necessarily lean towards economic process? As noted by a scholar, "achievement motivation may seek a variety of outlets...", as seen in past history, war, religious fervour, aristocratic exploit, etc., could serve as so many catharses. Explaining the drive towards economic performance by a special ethics was actually the force of Weber's position. This ethics, which was but an event in human history, interpreted acquisition as a duty, as a response to a calling. Such was indeed the depth of Weber's analysis: a specific ethics explaining a no less specific event, to wit capitalism. As Nisbet puts it: "It was the great achievement of Weber, however, to demonstrate irrefutably that the rise of capitalism in the West cannot be explained in (the) genetic, stage-producing-stage fashion. Apart from the discontinuity represented by the impact of Protestantism upon the medieval economy, there is no evidence that the economy would not have continued, despite its alleged internal contradictions, for a long period of time." In other words, in Weber's view, capitalism was an event, a unique phenomenon, and not, as in the Hegelian or Marxist fashion, a necessary moment of a general progressive trend. True, a special case, namely British industrialization, was later on extended to other countries, but originally it was neither particularization, nor a signal, far less a necessary moment of a general drive.

Pertinent though this standpoint is, we cannot for long remain insensitive to the objection mentioned earlier according to which economic growth need not be tied up with a specific religious belief. A consideration such as this leaves us with two choices only. Either we agree to take the Protestant ethics itself as an expression of a more profound tendency, without however falling back into the stage-producing-stage mode of thinking, or we consent to a radically eventful view, thus turning British industrialization into an event which led to various repercussions, among which is the spreading of industrialization to other countries. There is no doubt, however, that we would delve into a deeper root, were we to show that a common drive actually animates the alternative. May it not be, then, that some calling, religious perhaps, ethical in any case, must have been at the source of industrialization? If such is the case, then can one fail to see that, of all the drives so far proposed, only nationalism can pride itself of being a calling with universal validity?

The Ethics of Nationalism

No need to beat about the bush, there is every reason for supposing a similar spirit in the Protestant deviation, as analyzed by Weber, and in what is generally called nationalist aspiration. Thus, Gellner referred the "two elements of the rational spirit of which Weber was clearly aware (orderliness and efficiency)" to "something deeper", namely to nationalist aspiration. The reason is obvious: nationalist

drive has an equally dissolving effect on traditional societies. By demanding social integration and mobility, it is indeed activating the dissolution, in traditional societies, of their “hierarchically related sub-worlds, and the existence of special privileged facts...”37 all of which are impediments to the fostering of rationality. Only in a world where privileges and status ascriptions are declining and where more and more equalization is on the ascendant can rational view and practice prevail. For the need for achievement to arouse, there must be something to achieve, a merit to conquer; in a word the need is dependent on a open society.

Then can one, as yet, fail to remark the reciprocal link existing between democracy, industrialization and nationalism? Earlier, in what scholars had conveyed as a necessary condition for economic achievement, namely the dissolution of traditional society, we detected a democratic advancement. Seeing what nationalism expresses, namely the need for integration and equalization, the replacement of the hierarchical society by the society of the masses, the mutual connection of democracy and nationalism can no longer be denied. It is on the dissolution of traditional society that the ideology of national-state has thriven.

There remains, however, a particular difficulty. Even if the link between nationalism and democracy be granted, many scholars would none the less hesitate in speaking of an ethics of nationalism, without mentioning those who, in the light of recent experience, would frankly equate nationalism with anti-democratic state of mind. The facts seem to be there: far from inspiring ethical conduct, nationalism has unleashed here and there the most irrational tendencies of man. By associating man’s dignity with a cultural or ethnic specificity, by thus suppressing his universalist endowments, not only has nationalism driven men into colonial adventures and devastating wars, but it has also inspired the most inhumane racist doctrines and practices. When a regime is brandishing nationalist commitment, is it not, if anything, to suppress internal democratic aspirations? The problem is undeniable: if nationalism carried democratic demands, how comes it, then, that it became the cause of the most tragic moments of human history?

But any radical condemnation is no sooner accepted than it comes up against itself, for if no good has come out of nationalism, one will be all the more embarrassed to explain any of the great achievements of modern history. Though liberalism as well as Marxism had in various times ushered in the irremediable decline of nationalism, the one because it considered nationalist feeling as a dark force in man, the other because it saw in nationalism an instrument of class rule, all this, to quote Gellner, proved to be “utter nonsense”.38 Nationalism, on the contrary, held on as the very force which all explanations of the world as we know it today had to reckon with. If already liberalism has little to say in favour of the purported decline of nationalism, then how much less so may Marxist theory, in seeing that the national question accounts for all the shifts and divisions which have shaken the socialist world. How can one attribute to such an evil force the power of determining the course of history without condemning altogether this history as the work of an obscure force?

37 Ibid.
Moreover, the fact that an idea or a belief leads to reprehensible consequences does not imply that it was all evil or unethical. If such had been the case, no one of the existing religious beliefs would have crossed the threshold of immorality. More specifically, whether one agrees or not with the thesis that the Protestant ethics generated capitalism, one would not, however, think of counting as an objection the tremendous human suffering caused by the growth of capitalism. The truth is that no one idea, however generous and noble, can eschew the ordeal of disfigurement as soon as it tries to insert itself into reality. Nor can it be protected from being used as a cover for harmful design. What is tragic in human life is not that evil is combating good, but that it does so by aping good itself.

Thus to deplore the distortions of nationalism is not enough, there is also the obligation to reflect on its essence. We have already stressed the democratic inspiration of nationalism through its dissolving effect on traditional societies. More so than this disruptive action, what is most relevant to our purpose is the congruence between nationalist aspiration and the desire to do business. Ward remarks that the nation—state ideology is a form of unity which is based neither on blood nor on dynastic rule; it is rather the incarnation of the “values of business”. This is all too obvious: the nation—state idea expresses the triumph of cities, with their busy markets, over feudal rights. In order to operate rationally, these cities more and more required protection and the establishment of common laws. This trend was none other than the one bringing to an end the rule of privileges and hierarchy. The nation—state is therefore a framework for business requirement: it provides protection and ensures overall orderliness and social mobility, these being the conditions by which investment is encouraged, privileges abolished and merit rewarded. Thus all the facts conspire; as Gellner said: “modern society is not mobile because it is egalitarian, it is egalitarian because it is mobile.”

However, the correspondence between business drives and nationalist aspiration, as couched by Gellner, otherwise acceptable as a bare statement of link, becomes dubious when it is meant to signify that the nation—state is but a product of economic need, or as he himself said, that “it is the need for growth which generates nationalism, not vice—versa”. Indeed, put in this way, the position of the author differs little from the ordinary credo of economic determinism. And what is most questionable about economic determinism is that, as we saw, it can hardly be reconciled with the conduct of history. Industrialization is an event, an episode; it cannot be viewed as a determined outcome. Precisely, herein lies the remarkable fact: that which is impossible for economic determinism is sheer potency for nationalism to the extent that it can be said that nationalism rather than economic need explains industrialization.

Let us hasten to add that the merit of discovering the eminent role of nationalism in the process of industrialization belongs unquestionably to Rostow. His discovery is in fact twofold. On the one hand, there is the reactive nationalism of those countries which were either overtaken, like France, or late comers, such as Germany, Japan and Russia. The early industrialization of Britain, with its

39 Barbara Ward, Nationalism and Ideology, New York, 1966, p. 46
40 Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, pp. 24 – 5
41 Gellner, Thought and Change, p. 168
growing material power, was no doubt perceived by these countries as a threat which must be countered by a resolute industrialization. On that account, speaking of these countries, Rostow can write: “Men holding effective authority or influence have been willing to uproot traditional societies not, primarily, to make more money but because the traditional society failed – or threatened to fail – to protect them from humiliation by foreigners.”\(^{42}\) Let us admit that the idea of explaining the industrialization of these countries by the spur of reactive nationalism gives a more striving and heroic sense to history than the one which is cutting it down to the level of mere product of determinism, be it economic or ideal.

On the other hand, there is the suggestion that British religious dissent, in which Weber saw the source of capitalism, is itself a form, a manifestation of reactive nationalism. The suggestion is all the more appealing as all the major events of British history tended to pour into such channels as will contribute to the formation of a distinct and insular personality. Its struggle against the Church of Rome and the Spanish power which was backing it, its rivalries with France and with the Dutch financial and maritime power testify that British nationalism was particularly wrought by successive events. This allows to say that “British nationalism, transcending caste loyalties, created by a series of intrusions and challenges to a lesser island off a dominant mainland, may have been a major force in creating relatively flexible social matrix within which the process of building the preconditions for take-off was hastened in Britain...”\(^{43}\)

In the light of this remark, a number of interesting theoretical extensions are possible. The first bears on the connection between nationalism and inclination towards business. In discussing Gellner’s view, which explained nationalism by economic need, we proposed an inversed order of “causation”. The main reason is now clear: the threat of external powers on traditional societies, therefore reactive nationalism accounts for their move towards industrialization. Let us grant British industrialization as an instance of nationalist response and we will have one after the other, as diverse nationalist repercussions, the series of divergent industrializing efforts made by various countries to respond to the British challenge. Not the desire for economic gain but foreign challenge\(^{44}\) has everywhere triggered

\(^{42}\) Rostow, op.cit., pp. 26 - 7  
\(^{43}\) Rostow, op.cit., p.35  
\(^{44}\) Reactive nationalism seems to be at the very root of Marxism itself. Indeed, Marx’s rage against German speculative philosophy leads one to suppose that it stems from the perception of Germany being overtaken by both Britain and France. Thus criticizing Kant’s theory of good will, especially its pretension to be beyond material interests, Marx writes: “While the French bourgeoisie, by means of the most colossal revolution that history has ever known, was achieving domination and conquering the Continent of Europe, while the already politically emancipated English bourgeoisie was revolutionising industry and subjugating India politically, and all the rest of the world commercially, the impotent German burghers did not get any further than ‘good will’.” (The German Ideology, London, 1974, p. 97). For our part, we will not hesitate to extend the argument to the theoreticians of the French Revolution. For sure, their deep inspiration, as is clearly shown by the attitude of Voltaire and Montesquieu, points to the early British take-off. These words of Voltaire furnish a direct proof: “Commerce, which has brought wealth to the citizenry of England, has helped to make them free, and freedom has developed commerce. By means of it the nation has grown great; it is commerce that little by little has strengthened the naval forces that make the English the masters of the seas.” (Philosophical Letters, 1961, p. 39)
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off industrialization: such is the profound idea of Rostow. That the history of industrialization displays diversity, that not only nations have followed different paths, but that they do occupy different positions, some being advanced while others are lagging behind, in a word that this history did not take a unilinear direction is, need we insist, an expression of reactive nationalism, of the diversity of the efforts made to take up the challenge.

Nor can we fail to notice the close affinity existing between this theory of nationalism and the position of those theoreticians who tried to explain economic growth by a characteristic cultural change. Thus when Hagen speaks of the withdrawal of status respect, when McClelland deduces from the practice of self-reliance an increasing need for achievement, or when Hoselitz stresses the particular pathos of migrants, in a word, when a deviant personality appears, directly or indirectly, the necessity to take up a challenge transpires as the underlying cause.

In this respect, however, what is most interesting to remark is that, even though the founding ethical impulse was implicit in their analysis, all these theoreticians were content with a kind of psychological explanation. Even Rostow saw in nationalism a mere political attitude and refrained from getting to its ethical root. Such would have been, however, the only way by which one could still preserve the illuminating idea of Weber without reducing it to a particular belief. The more direct the recognition of the ethical root of nationalism, the greater would have been the opportunity to salvage the idea of call, of economic achievement as duty. What in this respect has vitiated the analyses of many scholars is that, given a certain psychological modification or reaction, they thought that there is enough motive to act in the projected way. Without entering into the controversial issue of psychological causation, without either mentioning the fact that the said psychological change in no way provides the real reason, hoping to be in line with facts about men, we simply believe that, of all the motivations, ethos has more power over men. It is indeed so even for the theoreticians that we have mentioned so far, since all of them make the psychological change dependent on the notion of challenge that should be overcome. Must we not conclude that the change is but the fulfilment of an instance which, above all, must be perceived and accepted as a duty? Short of ethical receptivity, no psychological change, it should be admitted, is likely to occur.

In other words, so much would be gained if only we could see in dissent, which is generally believed to be conducive to economic achievement, an expression of nationalism. In doing so, we preserve, first, the idea of call. For as a will to respond to a challenge, nationalism is particularly prone to a calling attitude. Hirschmeier noticed this when, dealing with Japanese nationalism, he wrote that a "new element appeared that resembled, in its function, the mentality of the Puritans. It was nothing religious, not a calling by God; it was rather a calling by the nation, by the emperor." Secondly, with the call, there comes the notion of duty, and with it the will to industrialization. Only as duty, therefore as an object of will, can industrialization be effective. To note the psychological prickling, the desire to achieve is one thing, to argue that it leads to effective accomplishment is another. The restrictions on enjoyment, the adoption of rational methods, the

acceptance of an open society, in a word all those moral virtues which render economic achievement possible cannot be fostered otherwise than as a result of a call by which alone, not simply desiring, but above all proving, becomes a necessity.

We can thus sum up our analysis by stating that nationalism was, and probably still is, to economic growth what the Copernican revolution was to the development of sciences. Nowhere is the opposition of this view to the prevailing theories of development more acute than in the question of historical determinism. Most theories of development, because they are, directly or indirectly, influenced by Hegel or Marx, conceive development as a low – governed process, as a move animated by inner necessity. To this necessity we owe the view that the new society, as Marx said, grows out from “the womb of the old society”.46 Thus there is a given progressive, stage – producing – stage movement, the very one which allows Hegel to define development as a process “by which that only is explicit which is already implicitly present”.47 However, facts do not suggest that industrialization has proceeded thus. Far from being the product of an inner directional drive, it was rather the outcome of reactive nationalism, itself understood as a moral uprising trying to cope with a challenge. Instead of a teleologically moving history, we thought that conceiving progress in ethical terms would invite one to express it in terms of rupture. Only as an intermittent break – through, and no more as a universal procession, can the idea of progress be in accordance with the facts of reality.

In place of the unilinear history we are thus pleading for a creative history, for that history which, as Bergson said of the evolution of nature, would develop “in the form of sheaf, creating by its very growth, divergent directions among which its impetus is divided.”48 In effect, we disclosed in nationalism a creative impulse launching history into divergent lines, all of which represented so many ways by which challenge was overcome. Everything appears as though history were prevented by nationalist curving from moving along a given directional line, perhaps to avert the inevitable exhaustion inherent in all uniformity. For, as stated by Levi – Strauss, it is “impossible to imagine mankind pursuing a single way of life for, in such a case, mankind would be ossified.”49

If no directional force controls history, if all progress is but a victory of an intermittent and individualized effort, the evidence seems to be that, contrary to the prevailing theories explaining man as a product of history, it is history which is the product of man. Indeed, neither mere psychological change, still less the action of objective material forces will ever make room for the notion of man as maker of his own history. The only way out is to conceive history as the expression of his will, of his ethical motivations. This in turn renders man’s freedom tangible at the very root of history. To the most appalling question, to the very one which would demand us to explain, in default of inner necessity, why

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46 Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, Penguin Books, 1975, p. 68
the world is as it is, we would thus have the courage to say that the world is exactly as men have wanted it. Let there be no misunderstanding: the world is never as we desire it, but by rediscovering the old wisdom of Epicurus who insisted on distinguishing the things which depend on us from those which do not, it is possible to say that the world understood as depending on our reactions, therefore as an ethical phenomenon, is exactly as we have willed it. The discovery of ethical issues at the very center of development theories, as it revives an old wisdom, turns this same wisdom into a permanent one. For it confirms a line of contemporary wisdom, the very one which led Sartre to state that “man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself”\(^50\) and that thereby “there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom”.\(^51\) The notion that man is responsible for everything makes economic development into an act of his freedom, into an outcome of what he wills, of the hierarchy of his drives. Should we not, then, try to familiarize ourselves with the idea that the proper expression for development is perhaps not science, but ethics of development?

That, at any rate, seems to us the only way endowed with the practical possibility of overcoming the major omission of our time, namely underdevelopment. Whatever is the socio-cultural explanation of underdevelopment, whether it is due to the effects of backwardness or economic dependency, the fact remains that no salvation is possible without the willing, or to use James’ expression, without the “heroic mind”.\(^52\) In this case, the heroic mind is the one which first of all admits that everything depends on it. No determinism, so it says, can explain the presence of wealth here and its absence there; nor can it provide the means to remove poverty. Because it does not rely on the forces of determinism, it immediately hoists itself at the level of the ethical. By so doing, instead of trying to activate a mechanism, it is getting ready to assume a duty, and thus to generate new possibilities by making the necessary sacrifices, or better still by realizing the imperative ranking of drives.

Precisely, the theories of development proposed so far, from modernization to socialism, all fail because in no way do they trace out the way leading to a willing posture. Modernization theory advocates, in the last instance, the solution of cultural change through the instillation of Western values and institutions into the still backward countries. For this, it relies on a form of causation which, either through direct diffusion or environmental determinism, is supposed to impregnate the backward culture with the values and methods of modernity. In all cases, there is a recipient and a donor, and it is assumed that by a kind of printing process all that exists in the donor will appear in the recipient. Need we say that this causal approach overlooks the simple fact that, as we are dealing with men, that is with spontaneous and self-directed beings, the mere inculcation of ideas does not necessarily bring about the will, any more than the gathering of organs will generate life. The free initiative of the recipient is here essential. Short of it, what we have is caricature, leading to a mere symbolic usage of modernity, as is most probably the case with underdevelopment.

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51 Sartre, op.cit., p. 34
52 W. James, op.cit., p. 83
It goes without saying that the importance of nationalism springs from its possibility of providing a framework for cultural change such as it is in accord with freedom. It makes change possible as self-determination, and modernization, instead of acculturation, becomes properly renaissance. Indeed, though many authors have taken note of the resurgence of the past whenever people are about to effect a major change, and thus, as Marx said, "precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them"\textsuperscript{53} it has not occurred to them that this recourse to past values is maybe due to the fact that in matters of mental phenomena change can only be a renaissance. Such should have been, however, the natural conclusion, seeing that the freedom of mind can allow change only as self-determination, that is as ensuring a resurrection. So that if, as Gellner noted it, "nationalism usually conquers in the name of a putative folk-culture",\textsuperscript{54} one need not be surprised since such is the way by which change can occur in accordance with the requirement of freedom. In other words, through nationalism, that is through the framework of self-determination, the recipient is transfigured into a willing culture, into a demiurge of its own drives, exalted as it is by the spur of duty accomplishment.

Interestingly enough, this same injunction can be maintained as regards those scholars who propose socialism as a solution to underdevelopment. For, as the suggested development scheme relies mainly on material incentives, we do not see how the theory, left to itself, will enhance the achieving appetite, any more than we do not see how it would justify the restraint on enjoyment. Leninism, as we saw, tried to overcome this deficiency by transfiguring socialism into a deferred enjoyment, into something resembling a call. Accordingly, may it not be suggested that by referring to a "call", Leninism had since then ceased to be an exclusively economico-political doctrine of development? For without the call, the restraint of enjoyment, unable to become a need for demonstration, or to use a Hegelian term, for "objectification", would rather incite the feeling of unsatisfaction and inadaptation. And as we said, in no way is greed the way towards development. The latter stems not from the need to satisfy, but from the need to accomplish a task. Only as an enterprise, or as it must be clear by now, as an ethical undertaking by which greed is spiritualized, sublimated, can the sacrifices, the ranking of drives, be felt, not as lack, but as "will to power".

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54 Gellner, \textit{Nations and Nationalism}, p. 57