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## The Dialectics of World-History: A Guiding Thread

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## ***The Dialectics of World-History:*** **A Guiding Thread**

**M.H. (Behrooz) Tamdgidi**

In what follows, I will make an effort to sketch a dialectical conception of world-history in its broad outlines, critically integrating useful elements from the guiding threads found in Marx, Gurdjieff, and Mannheim.<sup>1</sup> The purpose is to sketch an alternative guiding thread which incorporates human conscious and intentional action as a determining force in shaping major events, phases, and directions of world-historical change. Also central to the guiding thread is a conscious awareness of the divides in human inner and broader social life, of the dialectics of personal and global narratives shaping world-history in terms of the dialectics of part and whole. While the “objective” aspects of the world-historical development and the accidental nature of events are also accounted for, the role played by human agency in determining the direction of world-historical events is also acknowledged and incorporated into the structure of the narrative.

1. For an extensive comparative exploration of the contributions and shortcomings of Karl Marx, G.I. Gurdjieff, and Karl Mannheim in utopistics, see Tamdgidi (2002). The purpose of the present account, extracted from the latter work, is to advance a conceptual framework for further discussion and elaboration—hence, a “guiding thread.”

## **THE DIALECTICS OF WORLD-HISTORY<sup>2</sup>**

It is true that “[m]uch of the world history is the story of the way different civilizations have come closer together” (Roberts). But we often forget that it is *also* the story of how humanity split into “different civilizations” in the first place. Our subconscious fixation on “recorded” history, of say the past 5500 years, often diverts our attention from the long-term and large-scale processes that preceded recorded history. For the same reason, we also ignore the “unrecorded” histories of the “barbarian” nomadic populations who profoundly shaped the history of “civilized” world until very recent times. Human world-history is a singular spatiotemporal story of human alienation and reintegration—recorded or not.

Human evolutionary chronology is still a debated subject. Some scientists be-

2. Various reference sources on general outlines and major events of world-history have been consulted for the purpose of construction of the alternative guiding thread which follows. Andreas Nothiger's *World History Chart* (1989), John Morris Roberts's “World History” in *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1995), Bernard Grun's *Timetables of History* (1982), and the multi-volume collection on *Great Ages of Man: A History of the World's Cultures* are among the sources consulted. My understanding of the role played by nomadism in shaping world-history has been inspired by the research carried out by Mehretab (Abye) Assefa in the Sociology Department at Binghamton University. The convergence of my interest in seeking the origins of the east-west dichotomy in world-historical nomenclature and the significance of settled-nomadism dichotomy as underlined in Assefa's doctoral research on the origins of the modern world-system is another interesting case of dialectical identity of purpose and result that often emerges in researches of this kind. Although by no means I pretend to be carrying out an exhaustive research on nomadism in par with Assefa's dedicated interest and understanding of the matter, I hope the conceptual exercise introduced below would provide a useful alternative perspective on the matter derived from the findings of my own dissertation research.

lieve that our earliest primate ancestors lived as far back as 40 million years ago. The first hominoids evolved between 30 to 20 million years ago and were still roaming the earth 4 million years ago. The most recent ancestors of human species, the Homo Erectus, walked on earth about 2 million years ago. An evolutionary branch of Homo Erectus, the Homo Neanderthals, lived around 500,000 B.C. but became extinct about 100,000 B.C.. Traces of our species, Homo Sapien Sapiens—another branch of the Homo Erectus—have been traced back at least to 40,000 B.C..

Our nomadic ancestors were still more inclined to use their environments as they found them, rather than transforming them for their needs. It is not surprising, therefore, that with the apparent exhaustion in each locality of the available resources for their hunting, gathering, and later pasturing “technologies,” they simply moved to new locations across the planet. Global mobility was then itself a productive force. The major splitting of the homo sapien sapiens into separate groups spreading around the globe began around 40,000-35,000 B.C. with the Nomadic Revolution. This global spreading went hand in hand with the gradual emergence of the earth’s crust from the last Ice Age. Nomads’ concentration in the northern regions was due to the widespread grasslands providing plentiful existing food for hunting, gathering, and pasturing. 33,000 years ago nomads were already in Australia, and 20,000 years ago in North America. All the ice free zones of the globe were already occupied by 12,000 years ago. It is the discovery of agriculture that effectively ended the nomadic way of life in the southern regions, while in the north the nomadic life still continued until recent times.

The Agricultural (or the so-called “Neolithic”) Revolution began around 10,000 B.C., when raising of crops and domestication of animals were learned. Permanent settlements in villages then became

possible. But, given the relatively isolated and separate nature of human settlements around the globe, the agricultural revolution did not begin at the same time in each region. The original birthplace was in Mesopotamia, circa 10,000-9,000 B.C.; at this time raising of cereal grasses/plants, domestication of goats/sheep, and (later) taming of cattle were learned. The same was soon followed in the Nile Valley, and later in Indus Valley region. Crops were raised for the first time around 7,000 B.C. in southeast Asia. People in where now is Mexico also cultivated crops by 7,000 B.C.. The development of agriculture and settlements in villages stimulated the growth of small-scale technology. Development of new systems of work organization proceeded in parallel to the development of agriculture and light crafts. By 5000 B.C., there were already significant agricultural villages and settlements in Mesopotamia and Egypt which later gave rise to the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations. The Harappatian civilization in Indus Valley followed.

The rise of civilization in the proper sense of “civil”ization began with the development of cities, marking the advent of Urban Revolution. This signified the fundamental spatiotemporal division of material and mental labor, being made possible by the growing yields from agriculture on a continuous basis. Specialized occupations such as arts, crafts, building, trade, priesthood, etc., now became possible. The earliest civilizations emerged in Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates Valley) and Egypt (Nile Valley), and later in the Indus Valley. This was followed later by the emergence of ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean region (Crete), east Asia (Yellow River valley), and in the central Americas. In all these regions, proximity to rivers and cultivable land was essential.

But these settlements were not populated islands in the ocean of barren lands. The concentration of settled (both rural and

urban/“civilized”) populations in the above six regions was in the midst of “barbarian” populations to the north still living a nomadic life. The settled populations lived in the midst of a *world* population of nomads, albeit the latter being fewer in number and spread across wider regions. World-history is from the beginning the story of the *whole* human experience, of both settled *and* nomadic populations. No part of this story can be understood without taking into consideration the other part. Human history from its very beginnings was a global history. This is due both to the fact that the whole of human population originally spread from the same nomadic ancestry, and to the fact that their subsequent forging into a global society as evident today makes the prehistory of each population the prehistory of humanity as a whole.

Since the settled population itself originated from nomadic beginnings, the relation of the nomadic to settled (rural or urban) populations must be conceptualized in terms of the relationship between a whole and its part (see Figure 1). A problem with world-historiography is the partial focus on the history of the settled population as opposed to the nomads which for millennia surrounded and influenced the lives of settled populations. Such an approach ignores the fact that nomads themselves have world-historically been the major source of the settled populations. Populations of the original ancient civilization in Sumer, for instance, were nomads themselves originally, moving from the central Asian regions to the Mesopotamian region. Other populations, such as the Akkadians in Mesopotamia were of Semitic origins. The Elamites were themselves originally nomads migrating south from the Black Sea region. The key point here is to conceptualize the history of the settled population as an organic part and parcel of the world population which originally spread to cover the whole globe as a result of the No-

madic Revolution.

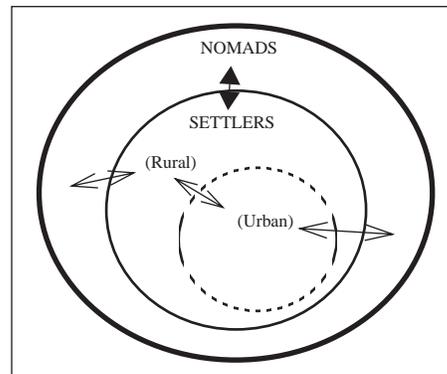


Figure 1: Conceptualizing Nomadic, Rural, and Urban Populations in Terms of the Whole-Part Dialectic

The nomadic mode of production was closely dependent on environmental changes and immediately responsive to climatic conditions. There has been a cyclical pattern in the earth’s climate in the north since the ending of Ice Age (Nothinger 1989:12). This cyclical pattern involves warmer and dryer areas during one period, followed by colder and damper areas in the succeeding period. It is only with the significant climatic changes brought about by large-scale human industry in modern times that the current climatic cycle in which we live today may be considered an exception characterized by a shorter cold and damp period, bringing about an earlier global warming.

The cyclical periods have been roughly thousand years in duration (see Figure 2<sup>1</sup> below). During the warmer and dryer periods in the north, pastoral life was threatened, leading to movements of nomadic populations towards southern and western regions of Eurasian landmass. These “mi-

1. The basic temporal framework of this diagram has been extrapolated from Nothinger’s account and diagram (1989:12). My earlier periodizations are conjectured based on the cyclical pattern of the later period.



igrations” towards southwest gradually acquired an invasive character as the new arrivals found resistance in previous migrants who had already been settled in lower regions and whose settlement patterns, originally rural and agricultural, had increasingly become urban as the agricultural production was improved and permanent spatiotemporal divisions of mental and material labor became possible. The degree of invasive success of the nomadic population was dependent on the war (and peace) technologies of both sides and the degree to which each side was unified or divided among themselves. The relationship was not one-sided, however. As a result of the dialectic of nomadic invasions on one hand and resistance by increasingly “civilized” and richer settlers on the other, not only nomads adopted more settler life-styles, but also settlers acquired nomadic characteristics in terms of their ability to mobilize themselves militarily and politically and become more aggressive towards other nomadic—and settled—populations. This dialectic was responsible for the increasing politicization of both settled and nomadic life-styles in subsequent centuries. Although the origins of “imperialism” was indigenous to the increasingly stratified settled populations themselves, the recurrent nomadic invasions significantly catalyzed imperial tendencies among both populations.

For a long time prior to 3500 B.C., the availability of natural resources for their nomadic way of life in the north, and the rudimentary life conditions of rural settlements in the south, did not provide the nomadic populations with the need and sufficient invasive force to substantially disrupt the ever increasing quantity and ever improving quality of life of the settled population. Earlier movements to southern regions were more “migrations” than invasions. This allowed the settled population in each region to develop in relative independence from the destructive invasive

force of the nomadic population in the north, on one hand, and from substantial disruptions from settled populations in other regions—given great distances and geological barriers that separated them. For these reasons, the nomadic population still did not play any substantial role in mediating and linking “ancient civilizations” which emerged during largely non-synchronous periods.

By “ancient civilizations” here is meant the indigenously evolved and permanently urbanized settlements in contrast to ones created later by imperial expansions of existing civilizations or populations to other regions. Ancient civilizations were largely pre-imperial settlements which gradually experienced their own deepening inner divisions of labor and differentiation of social classes and strata. They were not yet multi-civilizational, but were mini-systems more or less composed of homogeneous populations sharing common natural resources, languages, religious beliefs, administrative mechanisms, and social customs and traditions. If there were other settlements accessible to them, the relations were largely based on the exchange of ideas, skills, and sometimes products and populations rather than on forceful conquest and domination. If fighting erupted among them it was not for building permanent empires, but for resolving sporadic disputes.

Ancient civilizations across the above six major settlement regions of the world emerged more or less non-synchronously. With regards to both the east Asian and American ancient civilizations, it is important to note the 2000 year gap that separated the origination of rural settlement patterns in these regions compared to other regions. Ancient civilizations were necessarily great innovators. They were creative, and had to be in order to survive. They invented the basic cultural habitat and temporal calendars of human civilization. Philosophy, religion, and science were parts of intellectual specializations emerg-

ing from their midst, but these constituted more or less unified and “undisciplinary” aspects of what was central to their contribution to human civilization: Art. There was not yet rigid separations between these diverse aspects of human intellectual pursuit. It was as skilled creators, artists, and innovators that their distinguishing contributions to human development may be traced. Art was the *raison detre*, and the most original contribution of ancient civilizations to human world history.

Although we may be drawing a much rosier picture than the actual historical scene of the ancient period, we can nevertheless derive the general conceptual definition here that the ancient civilizations were “civilized” because they were more concerned with cultivating the inherent creative powers vested in human nature in the midst of a settled life characterized by non-interference in other populations, than with “invading” others’ lives, customs, and livelihood. To be “civilized,” and not a “barbarian,” means to not invade other people’s lives, customs, and livelihood, and instead respect their, and one’s own, right to self-determination for cultivation of inherent creative powers vested in human nature. Aside from the general and generic use of the term “civilized” for the rise of urbanized society, we may also use the term in terms of this “settled,” non-interfering, and non-imperial mode of living.

But imperialism was not imported into the ancient civilizations by the outer lying “barbarians.” It was home-grown. As early as 2300 B.C. in Mesopotamia, the first Akkadian empire incorporated Sumers into its domain. Egypt’s dynasties increasingly became divided and imperialist, seeking to expand their dominion to other outlying regions. The same may have perhaps been true of the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley which, in time, largely disappeared on its own before the arrival of new “migrants” from the north. The increasing stratifications in ancient societies and inter-

nal turmoil were also experienced in the east Asian and pre-Columbian Americas. Ancient civilizations themselves became a source of imperial and “barbarian” expeditions to outlying settlements and regions. And it was this increasing divisiveness and internal turmoil that made these earlier communities prey and vulnerable to the invasive force of nomadic “outsiders.”

Aside from the original archaic/Semitic populations whose migrations and settlements resulted in the rise of earliest ancient civilizations, the first major series of invasions of the south by northern nomadic populations took place during the 1700-700 B.C. climatic period. These “migrations” were generally towards the west and south passing through the Caucuses. Aryans moving south to the Indus valley and the Iranian Plateau were among the first wave of newcomers in this period. The Hellenic tribes which moved to the Balkans and to the Aegean and Mediterranean regions were also Indo-European in origin. The 1700-700 B.C. migrations encountered considerable resistance by civilizations of the south who had already become established as thriving, rich, and resourceful communities by this time, experiencing deepening inner divisions within and among themselves. This was in contrast to earlier climatic cycles when the differences in social development between nomadic and settled populations were still not significant and less a cause for major collisions between the two populations.

It is true that the most important by-product of the Urban Revolution was the invention of writing, and that it is with writing that “recorded” history began. However, the recorded history, often written by and from the point of view of the settled populations, has treated the nomadic migrants and invaders as outsiders and “barbarians.” For archaic/Semitic original populations who founded the ancient civilizations, themselves previous migrants, the newly arriving Indo-Europeans were

“barbarians.” But for Aryans, themselves migrants, Scythian became “barbarians” in turn. Greeks, another Indo-European “migrants” to the Mediterranean region, later referred to the Persian or Scythian outsiders as “barbarians.” This was a pattern in almost all regions: old comers referring to themselves as being “civilized” and to new comers as being outsiders and invaders.

With their increasing numbers and fighting power and warring tools, coupled with the exhaustion of their natural resources in the north, the 1700-700 B.C. Indo-European invasions substantially disrupted and changed the relatively autonomous ancient patterns of human development, ushering the age of imperialism—which is still with us today. It was the continuing conflict between the invading nomadic populations of the north and the defending settled (rural and urban) populations of the south that significantly shaped major events in world-history during subsequent millennia. Despite their home-grown sources, the rise of empires was in many ways a result of, and/or reaction to, the intensifying conflict between the nomadic and settled populations. As much as “barbarians” became settled and therefore adopted the life-styles of the “civilized” populations of the south, the “civilized” population of the south became “barbarians” by adopting the invasive manner and life-style of the northern nomads seeking expansion across the globe.

The rise of empires began a qualitatively new era in human history in which we are still living today. It signified the beginning of a forced, violent incorporative and reintegrative process of human development as a whole, following a long period of relative isolation of human communities across the globe. Whether such an imperialist drive for (re)globalization of human species was necessary or not, is not our purpose here to explore. Although the continual pressures of the invasive nomadic populations from the north was a signifi-

cant catalyzer for the rise of imperialism in world-history, one may argue that it was the deepening social (class, status, and power) divisions within the fabric of separate ancient civilizations that allowed the external pressures imposed by the invasive nomads to play such a catalyzing role. Whether one or the other was primary does not change the actual world-historical fact before us today, however; both factors contributed to the conditioning of circumstances which in time ended the “civilized” nature of the ancient human settlements and ushered the era of barbarian imperialisms.

By the time of the rise of the classical empires, many civilizations were already “ancient,” some having long disappeared from the scene. Given the non-synchronous tempo of emergence and development of various ancient civilizations, imperial expansions across civilizations also took place non-synchronously across the globe, adding significant complexities to the trajectory of development of each original civilization in light of more or less advanced state of development in other regions with which they came in contact through imperial expansion. The use of the term “civilization” and its continuity into the imperialist era must therefore be qualified in distinction from the earlier use in the pre-imperial period, for now the life and conditions of “civilizational” efforts were intricately tied to the phenomenon of imperialism. What at home appeared as “civilized” was the flip side of the “barbarism” displayed against other populations—settled or nomadic. For this reason, although it was also sometimes ancient civilizations and their descendents which partook in imperial expansions or succumbed to them, we will use the term “empire” during the present era for “civilizations” partaking in imperial expansion, or nomadic populations incorporating previous “civilizations” into their domain.

Three major forms of imperial expan-

sion may be distinguished from one another during the long imperialist era up to the present: political, cultural, and economic. To be sure, all empires and imperial expansions involve all these three dimensions. Culture, polity, and economy must be conceptualized in terms of part/whole dialectics (Tamdgidi 2002). The political and the cultural processes must not be conceptualized as being “non-economic,” but integral to it. Indeed, it was the political and cultural preconditions set by precapitalist empires that made possible the modern economic form of imperialism.

What distinguishes the three forms of imperialism from one another is the primary means by which the incorporation of new regions into the empire is carried out and maintained. In political imperialism, the means are militaristic invasion, control, and domination over other communities and civilizations. In cultural imperialism, it is the violence of “peaceful” ideological conversion of other communities to one’s own cultural and religious beliefs that plays the key role. In economic imperialism, the primary means is the exploitative integration of the natural and human resources and wealth of other communities. The key processes distinguishing the three forms of imperialism are domination, conversion, and exploitation. We do not uniformly apply a common predetermined materialist or idealistic logic to the three imperialist periods to uncover the “economic basis” of political or cultural imperialism, or the political basis of cultural imperialism, or of the cultural basis of political and economic imperialism, etc. Political force itself can be a determining factor, and cultural conversion can also be a determining factor for imperial expansion. Nor do we apply the same uniform standard across civilizational spaces. We regard it possible that contemporaneously economy may have ruled here, culture there, politics somewhere else, or a combination of the three elsewhere. The relative lack of eco-

conomic development under political and cultural imperialism itself can be explained by the extra-economic determinations of social development during these periods, not vice versa. In contrast, it is the establishment of economic foundations of cultural hegemony and political domination in the later modern period that has made possible the deceptive, seemingly “independent,” cultural and political forms of neocolonial imperialism in the contemporary period.

Classical periods were periods of political imperialism, that is, of the process of reintegration of human settlements through sheer power and violent force. By political imperialism is here meant domination of other communities for its own sake. Such political imperial expansions of course also involved cultural and economic needs, interests, and processes as well. Politics is at the same time a cultural and economic process. However, what distinguishes political imperialism from other forms is that ruling other communities is pursued for its own sake rather than being simply a means for other cultural and economic ends. Other communities were conquered, simply for the sake of retaliation or of self-protection.

Although political imperialism may be considered to have originated back in 2300 B.C. with the rise of Akkadian empire, it was in the aftermath of the Indo-Europeans invasions of the south and the rise of Assyrian empire circa 800 B.C. that the classical period took shape, later reaching its height in the Persian, Hellenic, and Roman empires in west Asia and Europe, Maurya and Han empires in south and east Asia, and the old and new Maya empires in the pre-Columbian Americas—largely nonsynchronously across space. Classical periods entered their structural crises during A.D. 300-500 and were gradually followed by cultural imperialisms of Zoroastrian (Sasanid), Christian (Rome), Islamic (Arabic), Hindu (Gupta), Buddhist (Tang and Sung), and pre-Columbian religious empires (Inca, Aztec, and Taltec), which presided over

various increasingly synchronous “medieval” periods. The fall of Constantinople in A.D. 1450 ushered a rapid globally synchronous transition phase to the modern period characterized by the rise of economic empires originating in western Europe. The older model of imperialism characterized by the monopolistic drive of a single power increasingly proven to be a failure, through sheer violence of trial and error the modern economic empires invented collective imperialism which became finally and formally established in mid twentieth century after two world wars with the formal institutionalization of the “United Nations.” This innovation in imperialism, long-time in the making since the fifteenth century, in effect created the most successful world-empire in history characterized by a singular economy but of multiple cultures and polities organized in a system of hierarchical core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral “nation-states” (Wallerstein 1983). By mid twentieth century, the whole face of the globe became finally integrated into the economic world-system of collective imperialism.

It is important to note here the *plural* form we use for the classical and medieval periods, and to some degree for the early modern period. There was not a single “classical” or “medieval” or “modern” period across the globe, but several classical periods, medieval periods, and early modern periods. This was largely due to the fact that the further back we go in history, the less synchronous trajectories of human development in different regions of the world become. What we really mean by pluralizing classical, medieval or early modern periods is the different tempos, spaces, and natures, of political, cultural, and economic forms of imperial expansion in different regions of the world. The non-synchronicity also made it possible that especially during the transition periods, various forms of empires confronted one another contemporaneously. The three ideal type periods, in

other words, were not rigidly distinguished across time and space, but interpenetrated across different concrete spatiotemporal sites of imperial expansion.

The key provided by the nomadic-settled dialectic allows us to understand not only why ancient civilizations “vanished,” but also why the historical period since then has been overall a history of imperial expansionism rather than of a more “civilized” humanization process. The nomadic invasions did not simply make the barbarians civilized; they also made the civilized barbarians, mobilizing the world over to conquer and subdue “other” members of their own species. It is the shock of nomadic invasions exerted “externally” on ancient civilized settlements that led to the overtermination of the political force and the emergence of various “classical” periods of political imperialism experienced non-synchronously in different “civilizations.” Philosophy, especially of law and order and government, was the paramount world-outlook of the classical periods. In the academies of the classical period, philosophy ruled. Human world-outlook became for the first time dualistic during these periods.

During the classical periods of political imperialism, the trajectories of development of almost all areas in the region from the Mediterranean and north Africa to the Indus Valley became forged into a singular historical process. The classical period in the region did not emerge overnight, however. It was a result of a long period of transition. Given the lack of synchronicity in the emergence of civilized settlements, in fact, there was no single period of transition to classical empires, but several. In the Mesopotamian region, the transition lasted about 1500 years from 2300 to 800 B.C.. 1200 B.C. was a crucial turning point in the whole region since it was around this time that the Indo-European nomads invading the south began using weapons forged from a much more superior metal: Iron. The earlier bronze weapons could not withstand the

power of the new iron weaponry. All the pre-1200 B.C. empires in the region succumbed to the invading migrants as a result of use of the iron weapons, and it was through the adoption of these same weapons, in fact, that the classical age of political imperialism itself began.

In the classical period, politics ruled. Politics was not an “epiphenomenal” factor hiding an underlying “economic” logic. It was *the* determining role of the political force that influenced the nature of cultural and economic processes. The dominant ideology of the classical periods was philosophy, especially that pertaining to law and politics. It was during this period that “international law” was born. But also this was the period which human world-outlook became for the first time dualist. The splitting of “matter” and “mind” became the “fundamental” question of philosophy, and depending on the answers provided by this or that philosopher, materialist, idealist, skeptical, or agnostic approaches emerged. However, this was also the classical age of dialectics, born because the elements which it sought to unify were now split for the first time. The emergence of philosophy and the splitting of idealist and materialist world-outlooks served the political purpose of an aristocracy seeking to legitimate its power over its own “slave” and other “barbarian” populations. Slavery was not the “basis” of classical political empire; it was its result. The classical period bequeathed to the future the basic forms and rules of world-systemic government—albeit in its imperial form.

The most important legacy of classical periods of imperialism was the formation of cross-communal and multicivilizational political structures, organizations, laws, and philosophies. The attitude was mainly that of pride in one’s “civilizational” philosophy in ruling others. “Greatness” was defined in how large a territory, and how many diverse “civilizations,” were brought under the rule of one’s empire. Babylon in-

vented the first laws. Assyria was proud of its brutality. Persia was proud of its religious toleration. Greece was proud of its democracy and natural philosophy. Rome was proud of its skills and art of government. It is true that there were cultural pride and economic gain motivating imperial expansions, but overall the purpose was to conquer, to expand one’s dominion and/or to reduce the potentials of being conquered by rival emerging empires. Insecurity were facts of life. The threat of political subjugation by other “barbarians,” settled or nomadic, was imminent everywhere. Conquer or be conquered. Often imperial expansions ended as soon as they were achieved; this perhaps explains the narrower, political, nature of objectives of imperial expansion during this period. The political model of imperial expansion sooner or later entered periods of structural crisis across regions, however; the excesses of power led to significant moral decline and questioning of the purpose and meaning of life in both the “metropole” and the “colonies.” Art, as well as religion and early science, were of course important hallmarks of the classical period, but they served the purpose of politics and its ideological weapon, philosophy. It was in response to the failing efforts in political imperialism that a new, cultural, form of imperialism was invented. The leading ideological weapon during the new periods of cultural imperialism was religious conversion. In time, the demise of political empires ushered various “medieval” periods of cultural imperialism, increasingly synchronized across world settlements. Cultural empires of medieval periods were predominantly religious, and religion was the hegemonic world-outlook in these empires.

A.D. 500-1500 in Europe has been described as the period during which “Great religions ... and scholarship developed as people wondered about the meaning of human life and the mysteries of nature” (Roberts 422). This period is also known as the

Medieval period or the Middle Ages, or even Dark Ages, in Europe where the influence of Christianity was paramount. It was post-designated as a “middle” period for it fell between the time of the classical world and the start of the “modern” era in A.D. 1500. The use of the term for other regions of the world would be problematic if the same beginning and end dates were basically transplanted onto them, and the same quality of “darkness” was also assigned to the experience of other regions. However, if we consider the non-synchronicities in the rise of civilizations and of political empires in different parts of the world—a fact which still was true during the period across the Eurasian landmass and in the Americas—it would be possible to consider various regions as having had their own nonsynchronous medieval periods. What the variously dated “medieval” periods in different regions of the world shared was the common element of the use of culture, especially religion and religious conversion, as the primary means and justification for imperial expansion. The empires of the medieval periods were largely religious empires, seeking to expand their power through cultural and religious conversion of other human settlements and regions of the world.

The fact that medieval Europe experienced a “dark age,” may not have been necessarily due to the predominance of Christianity or religion in general as a dominant ideology. That the religious experience became “dark” in Europe may have had more to do with the experience of absorbing the brunt of the second wave of nomadic invasion from the north, an experience which shaped the way religion was itself interpreted and practice by the nomadic conquerors. In contrast, the Byzantine empire, which was also Christian and, later on, the Islamic empire are not characterized as being as “dark” as what the western European populations experienced. These other medievalisms have in-

stead been portrayed as flourishing periods during which cultural legacies of ancient times were more or less preserved and absorbed into their imperial development efforts.

Although religion became a dominant ideological force for imperial expansion during the medieval periods, the sources from which various empires drew upon to build their new cultural empires had been formed during the classical periods—similar to the early appearance of the model of Akkadian imperialism long before the advent of classical empires. In fact, religious movements were the utopistic movements of the classical periods, as philosophy and political (“democratic”) utopistic movements took shape earlier in the transition to the classical periods. Judaism, which had been the particularist religion of Hebrews fleeing Egypt, began to take a more universalist character during the period when Judah and Israel tribes united to build their independent kingdom. Subsequently the Hebrew Prophets, increasingly critical of the luxurious courts of Hebrew kings, built an universalist monotheistic religion which became the source from which Christianity and Islam drew in subsequent centuries. The final Hebraic monotheistic religion was shaped in Babylonian captivity during 597-538 B.C., and it was during the same period that similar religious inventive efforts were being undertaken in other communities. This was a renaissance period for the east.

While Hebrews were building their monotheistic religion in the western regions of the Middle East, Zoroaster also began to teach a new religion in Persia around the same time. His teaching, centered around the dualist conflict of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, was nevertheless also monotheistically oriented in that the overall supremacy of Ahura Mazda in the end was sought and considered possible—though this was made dependent on the active human participation in the struggle of good against evil. In the Indian region, it was also

in 563 B.C. that Siddhartha Gautama (future Buddha or Enlightened One) was born who later abandoned a life of luxury to seek religious enlightenment. Buddha's teaching was a reaction to the social conditions resulting from the caste system enforced by the Brahmins which rigidly preserved the hierarchies among the living by promising the possibility of reincarnative transcendence of them only by faithful adherence to the social division in life. Buddha's teaching in effect suggested that all social castes were equally affected by worldly suffering, and that it was possible through a middle path to avoid both self-mortification and self-indulgence in order to find salvation in this world.

However, it is important to make a distinction between the rise of religious teachings and the more secular philosophical doctrines that were also being developed concurrently around the same time. The religious teachings were utopistic reactions to the dominant political empires prevalent at the time, and it is in the course of medieval periods that they were rediscovered and elevated to official religious status by the rising cultural empires. However, teachings of Confucius in China, or those of philosophers in classical Greece, were more or less systemic doctrines prevalent contemporaneously in the political empires being established and spread at the time. It was in fact in reaction to the secular doctrines of Confucius that Taoism was born in China as a passive religious doctrine, advocating retreat from complexities of the world to simple living close to nature. Likewise, we have to make a distinction between the philosophic doctrines dominant during the classical Greece and the utopistic religious teachings such as those espoused by Pythagoras and other secret societies.

The revival of religious and secular thinking and inventiveness during 600-400 B.C.—which may signify the first (eastern) cultural renaissance—became significant much later on when the current secular and

political ideologies and philosophies of classical periods in these regions lost credibility and authority with the decline and fall of classical empire by the early centuries after the birth of Christ. The rise of Christianity was itself an important by-product of the decline of the last and greatest major classical empire of the classical period, the Roman Empire. It was with this decline that we find a renewed search for new messiahs in the bazaars of the Middle East, and the religious doctrines which had been invented a long time before, especially during 600 B.C., became resurrected and used as weapons for a new cultural mode of imperial expansionism. For this reason, it is important to make a distinction between the original religious doctrines and the imperial use to which they were put by the emerging empires of the medieval periods. Religion in itself is not the culprit for imperialism, in other words, as much as philosophy was not so for political imperialism during the classical period, nor science for economic imperialism in the later modern period. That these fragmented forms of human knowledge became increasingly split from one another and acquired an ideological character and were thereby substantively and organizationally manipulated and revised to become primary or secondary means of imperial expansion were altogether different processes that must be distinguished from the purposes for which these world-outlooks were originally invented by ancient civilizations as aspects of the essentially creative and artful human pursuit.

The ascendancy of monotheistic religion to a dominant ideology was itself an important expression of the central function of religion in cultural imperialism during the medieval periods. Zoroastrianism, and Judeo-Christianity and Islam were of course monotheistic. What is interesting is that Hinduism itself also began in the early centuries A.D. to cast away its Brahmanic polytheism and embrace a universal theis-

tic architecture dominated by the more unified trinity of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu. If the advance of political empires during previous classical periods exposed various cultures to the multiplicities of deities and gods of various separate settlements, the acknowledgment of a single deity and an all powerful god legitimated the expansion of cultural empires to other regions. It is not surprising that among all the religious doctrines adopted by cultural empires during the medieval periods, it was the monotheistic religions of Judeo-Christianity and Islam that became the dominant ideologies of cultural imperialism during the period, as a whole constituting the largest religious traditions of the world today.

As the disillusionments of the fall of classical Greco-Roman empire led to search for religious values in Christianity, the disillusionments of the Confucianist empires of classical China led to the revival and more systematic incorporation of Buddhist religious teachings. The medieval periods witnessed a long process of Christianization of Europe (and later of Americas), Islamicization of the Middle East, north Africa, western India, and central Asia, Monotheicization of Hindu India, and Buddhification of East Asia, including China, Indochina, and Japan.

The medieval periods were characterized by an emphasis on the "civilizing" role of culture and religion in the imperial expansions. That religious imperial conversions took violent or peaceful forms here and there does not change the essentially cultural form of imperialism during the medieval periods. Here again we need not identify religion and culture as "epiphenomenal" factors explicable only by an "underlying" economic or political logic. Religious and cultural motives, conflicts over value systems and identities expressed in religious and cultural forms, themselves played an important role not only as motives for imperial expansion, but as goals for which various forms of eco-

nomie and political organization had to be invented and used. The feudal system, characterized by the rule of a landowning nobility closely tied to or even ruled by the Church as exercised through absolute forms of monarchy, was the best suited form of economic organization for religious and cultural imperialism. If during the classical periods, the dominant ideology took the shape of philosophical discourses and doctrines, in the medieval periods ideology was predominantly expressed around religion, pro or con. In the academies of the medieval periods religion ruled. The human mind, having become dualist in the preceding classical era, gravitated towards idealism during the medieval periods and in many ways, despite the more or less still non-synchronous periods of medievalism in various regions of the world, the idealist and religious natures of the dominant ideology and world-outlook were common features across diverse cultural empires.

Of significance here is to recognize that the second major nomadic invasion of the "civilized" world during the A.D. 300-1300 climatic period coincided with the rise and demise of cultural empires. This coincidence was partly "accidental" socially (or "necessitated" due to broader climatic causes) and partly world-historical, given the decline of classical empires and of the deepening divisions among world's "civilizations" as a whole. This time around, for the triumphant Indo-European settled populations, the newly arriving Hun, Turkish, and Mongolian invaders from the west, or of the northmen, such as Germanic tribes or later Vikings, arriving from the north, were "barbarians." Mongols were "barbarians" to the Chinese and other settler communities. Turks and Mongols were barbarians to the Indians and Persians. Arabs were barbarians to Rome. Germanic tribes, Celts, Avars, Magyars, Goths, Varangians, Merovingians, Crolingians, etc., were among other nomadic populations that invaded the lower regions of Europe during

the second climatic period. These populations did not suddenly come into existence at the time they invaded the south. They had “histories” of their own as old as the civilized world—only unrecorded and unknown to the settled populations they occupied.

The coincidence of the second shock of nomadic invasions with the medieval periods of cultural imperialism was experienced differently according to the particular spacetimes of the contacts made by various settlements. The medieval Europe became “dark” not because of religion, but because it experienced the destructive brunt of Gothic and Germanic invasions from the north. The flourishing Byzantium, and the golden age of Islam are evidence for the fact that religious empires did not necessarily have to be “dark” during this period—this, of course, in relative terms. Islamic and Persian civilizations themselves later experienced their own “dark age” as a result of the destructive force of Mongolian invasions. The invasive force of the nomadic populations during the second climatic period was also made possible in general by their mobility and relatively more superior technologies of movement and aggression. Again, the result of these invasions was determined by the relative technologies of war and peace, and of the inner divisions or unifications of both sides. If Iron weapons were key in the destructive force of Indo-European invaders during the earlier warm climatic period, during this warm climatic period horseback raiding was a key aid for the success of invasions by Central and East Asian nomads, while ship-building and navigational technologies of northern European nomadic tribes during this climatic period supplied them with superior mobility and aggressive capability in confronting the settled populations of southern Europe. The discovery of the military uses of explosives, of compass, etc., long after their invention is a great reminder of how the inventions of

ancient and settled civilizations were not often the cause of the rise of violence and imperialism, but how the barbarianization of world politics as a result of the rise of imperialism provided avenues whereby such inventions could be put to military and violent use. This was the same story of how philosophy, religion, and science became themselves reinvented and used in time for the pursuit of political, cultural, and economic imperialisms.

The birth of global history in the post-1500 period is a misnomer. World-history has always been global ever since the Nomadic Revolution, thanks to both the shared earlier bio-genetic heritage of human species as a whole, and the mediating role the nomadic incursions into the settled and “civilized” world played later in linking diverse histories of “civilizations” to one another. We may say that the history of various regions of the world became more synchronized spatiotemporally in the post-1500 period, but non-synchronicity does not mean lack of a singular global history.

The Turkish and Mongol nomadic empire played a significant role in synchronizing developments across the three Eurasian empires: the Christian Empires of the west, Islamic empires of the middle east, and the Chinese empire in east asia. It is true that Mongols played a significant role in destruction of cultures of those they conquered; but in time, they also contributed to transfer of much information across the “civilized” world. The transfer of knowledge about Chinese inventions of gunpowder, compass, paper, significantly contributed to the changes which lay at the foundation of the modern world, for they contributed to the fluidity of information, things, and military powers across cultures of the old and the new world.

It was Europe’s earlier dark age that brought about the earlier recovery of the late medieval renaissance, as the ending of the earlier Indo-European invasions had brought about the classical renaissance of

the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. from which classical philosophies, and later medieval monotheistic religions, emerged triumphant. Although the creative humanism of late medieval renaissance was short-lived and later overshadowed by the hegemonic rise of science, it provided another jolt to human “civilization” regarding the possibilities latent in human creative powers. It was as a result of collapse of medieval cultural empires that new, increasingly world-systematic, processes of economic imperialism originated in Europe. The clashes of economic empires among themselves and surviving remnants of cultural empires, eventually resulted, through a series of horrendous world wars (and not just those we know of in the 20<sup>th</sup> century), in the rise of the modern world-system of collective imperialism. The rise of collective imperialism is an unprecedented turning point in the history of global imperialism ever since the rise of early empires over the ashes of ancient civilizations. At last the world became economically, politically, and culturally integrated synchronously—albeit through inherently repressive and imperial means.

The period 1500-1945 witnessed great changes in all aspects of life around the world. The world’s population more than tripled from 450 million in 1500 to 1.5 billion by 1900. Cities and towns grew steadily during this period. This period is that of ascendance of the European economic empire(s) around the world, accompanied by significant scientific, technological, and economic developments. Although the original capitalist world-economy that emerged was limited in geographical influence, in time the scope increasingly expanded to cover the whole globe by the late 1900s. It took two massive world-wars during the first half of twentieth century to finally settle the dominions of various economic empires that now collectively rule the world.

The capitalist world-economy does not necessarily have to be characterized by

multiple states. The multiplicity in fact is a misnomer. The interstate system already constitutes a more or less singular state structure for the whole world capitalist economy. What made the singular (though hierarchical) intersystem necessary, and possible, was the emerging conflict over various economic empires from Europe whose continuing struggle for supremacy over other world regions led to an unprecedented innovation in imperial governance: collective imperialism. The collective nature of modern imperialism not only has provided an unprecedented staying power for the hegemony of a particular set of imperial powers headquartered in the west, but has also assured that no single imperial power could have the necessary organizational, economic, political, and ideological force and justification for ruling the world alone (Wallerstein 1996).

In the academies of modern economic imperialism science rules. Science has been metamorphosed into the ideology of collective imperialism, and endowed with considerable financial and interstate organizational resources to maintain the hegemony of a collective world empire more interested in knowing the present and the past than in reshaping the future in alternative paths. The “objective” exclusion of the “scientist” from her or his subject matter allows systematic development of scientific research projects devoid of humane values, necessity, and urgency. Modern science and technology creates more problems for humanity than it resolves.

If science has been the predominant ideological expression of the modern economic and collective imperialism, postmodernity is today the ideological expression of the period of structural crisis of collective economic imperialism involving increasing reglobalization of all economic, cultural, and political processes of human life. “Globalization” is a manifestation of the deepening rivalry of divergent interests among

imperial forces seeking to reintegrate the global village. The blurring of intellectual predeterminisms of economy, culture, and politics; the questioning of artificial economic, cultural and political borders separating humans from one another, the increasingly evident failures of all past efforts to reintegrate humanity into a just global society, are all symptomatic of the structural crisis of collective economic imperialism. However, the general global crisis of the capitalist world-system today is a general crisis not only of collective economic imperialism, but also a general crisis of imperialism itself, i.e., of the barbarian mode of “civilizing” the world through diverse imperialist means of political domination, cultural conversion, and economic exploitation.

As illustrated in Figure 3 below, world-history has been a singular spatiotemporal process of dialectical splitting and reintegration of the original human species. It is in the context of this world-historical process that the study of any world-system, or the “comparative” study of world-systems in general, can be meaningful. The search for “economic” criteria for delineating world-systems from one another at a particular space-time ignores the fact that the apparent “isolation” of a particular mini- or grand world-system is itself only a transient episode in the singular world-historical process of alienation and reintegration of humanity. Using modern “materialist” logics of historical investigation to decipher the boundaries of world-systems is a result of our dualistic and Cartesian modes of predeterministic theorizations which separate “matter” from “mind” and allot primacy to the former viz-à-viz the latter. In such a conceptual framework politics and culture do not have the same weight as the “material” linkages, exchanges, and chains. But even then, the integrative role played by the “unrecorded” history of the barbarian nomadic movements leaves no doubt that at no time in world-history were hu-

man settlements really separate and isolated from each other—for their separations and isolations themselves were world-historical products.

World-history is much more than an assembly of “physical” products and technologies, and linkages. It is an ensemble of human biologies, mythologies, ontologies, epistemologies, arts, psychological patterns of behavior, intergenerationally transmitted subconscious imprints, ideas, as well as forms of cultural-ideological, politico-military and economic social organization. As such, the ties that link human “civilizations” are much deeper and much older than trade patterns. Previous linkages, either before the separation of early communities or during the process of imperial reintegration, had already meshed human destiny into an inseparable whole long before even the rise of ancient civilizations. Only a glance at our schematic representation, in Figure 3 below, of the enormously long process of human prehistorical evolution compared with the relatively short “moment” of the modern world can indicate the degree to which biological, psychological, cultural, political, as well as economic, human legacies had already “globalized” the human experience long before recent awakenings of the global nature of the modern world.

Generally, as illustrated in Figure 4 by the increasingly straightened transition lines separating parallel periods across various regional settlements, the further back we go in the imperialist era from the economic to cultural and political phases, the less synchronicity we find in the nature of human transition across various developmental periods. The closer we come to the present, however, the more synchronous the spatiotemporal patterns of development of human settlements become. Regardless of whether, when, and how, any regions of the world became reintegrated into the world community, the present singular nature of human habitat has made

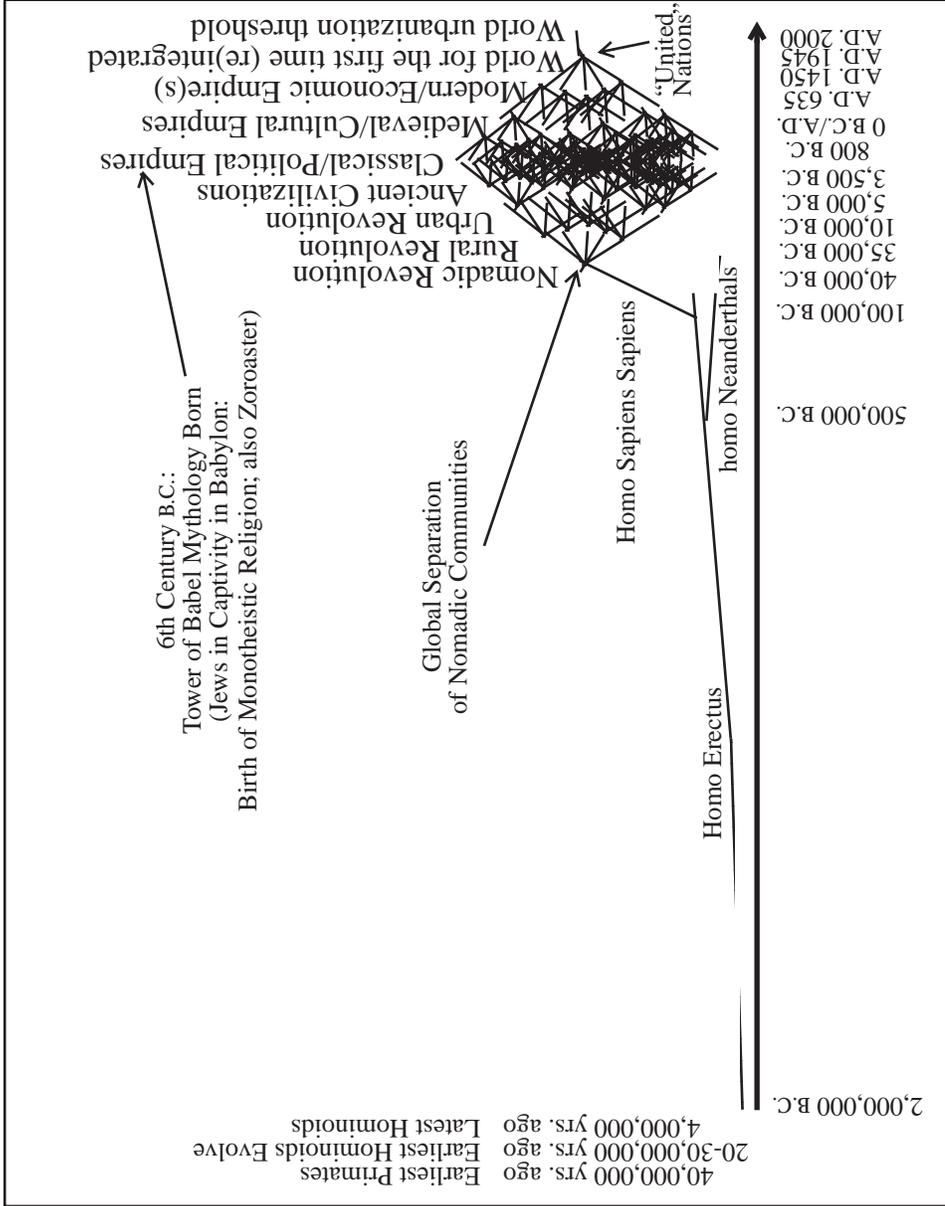


Figure 3: Temporal Flow of World-History as a Process of Human Alienation and Reintegration

the histories of all economies, imperial systems, and civilizations an integral part of the human world-history as a whole.

The settled-nomadic conflict, the south-north conflict, is indeed the source of the east-west dialectic long ingrained in our world-historical vocabularies and imaginations. The introversive nature of the east, and the extroversive nature of the west, are expressions of the same dialectics of settled versus nomadic life-styles, one content with and living in the present, seeking inner mystical harmonies, the other seeking expansion and utopias in promised lands in ever distant regions. The east-west dialectic is an expression of the self-global logic of human development at work in particular world-historical spacetimes as pursued by settled and nomadic populations. Ancient civilizations were by nature self-developing, and self-determining. That was, after all, their *raison detre* as opposed to the nomadic life-style from the midst of which they had themselves emerged. But this narrow self-centeredness, in the global context of other (re)settling and nomadic populations, proved self-defeating. They could not reckon with the sheer invasive force of the nomadic populations which in time themselves became settled while simultaneously making the settled populations “nomadic” and globalizing. The civilized-barbarian dialectic of course worked both ways. But the barbarian logic of human development at work during the long imperialist era of classical political, medieval cultural, and modern economic empires, have also proven to be self-defeating—for its very invasive logic is dehumanizing and alienating. The imperial mode of globalization by its very nature undermines human self-determination, arising from the self-creative human nature. A *civilized* humanity can only be a world-system of self-determining individualities and communities.

The contrasting introversive and extroversive dialectic of the east-west conflict

must not be seen simply as grand, long-term and large-scale, modes of behavior at the level of large communities. Such grand structures are produced and reproduced on the micro and personal scale of human relationships in the midst of our every day lives, here and now. The spatiotemporal distancing of “self” from “society” in our methods, theories, and praxes, is itself an expression of the splitting dialectic of settled and nomadic life-styles playing itself out at the personal level of our everyday lives. Imperialism and colonization are not just world-systemic processes, but intra/inter/extrapersonal processes as well at the local level. To dominate, to convert, and to exploit “others” without and within are micro processes which express, reproduce, and make possible macro processes of global imperialism on a world-historical scale. The global and the personal cannot be separated for they relate to one another in terms of the dialectic of part and whole. Transformation of the whole cannot take place without that of its parts.

If the mysticisms of ancient civilizations sought the good society via “Know Thyself,” the imperialist era has been inspired by various ideologies and technologies of Know Thy World. Not only mysticism, but also utopianism as well as the hegemonic “academic” institutions have split in time into their philosophical, religious, and scientific variants during the classical, medieval, and modern periods. The philosophical dualism has divided and is still dividing both the academic, mystical, and utopian movements which aim to provide humanity with the necessary conscious and intentional energies for building alternative personal and world-historical realities. Such dualisms lie at the root of the spatiotemporal distancing of the self and social paradigms of revolution across the eastern and western civilizational divide. They have all equally shared in common a reluctance to acknowledge the identity of human self and social knowledge and

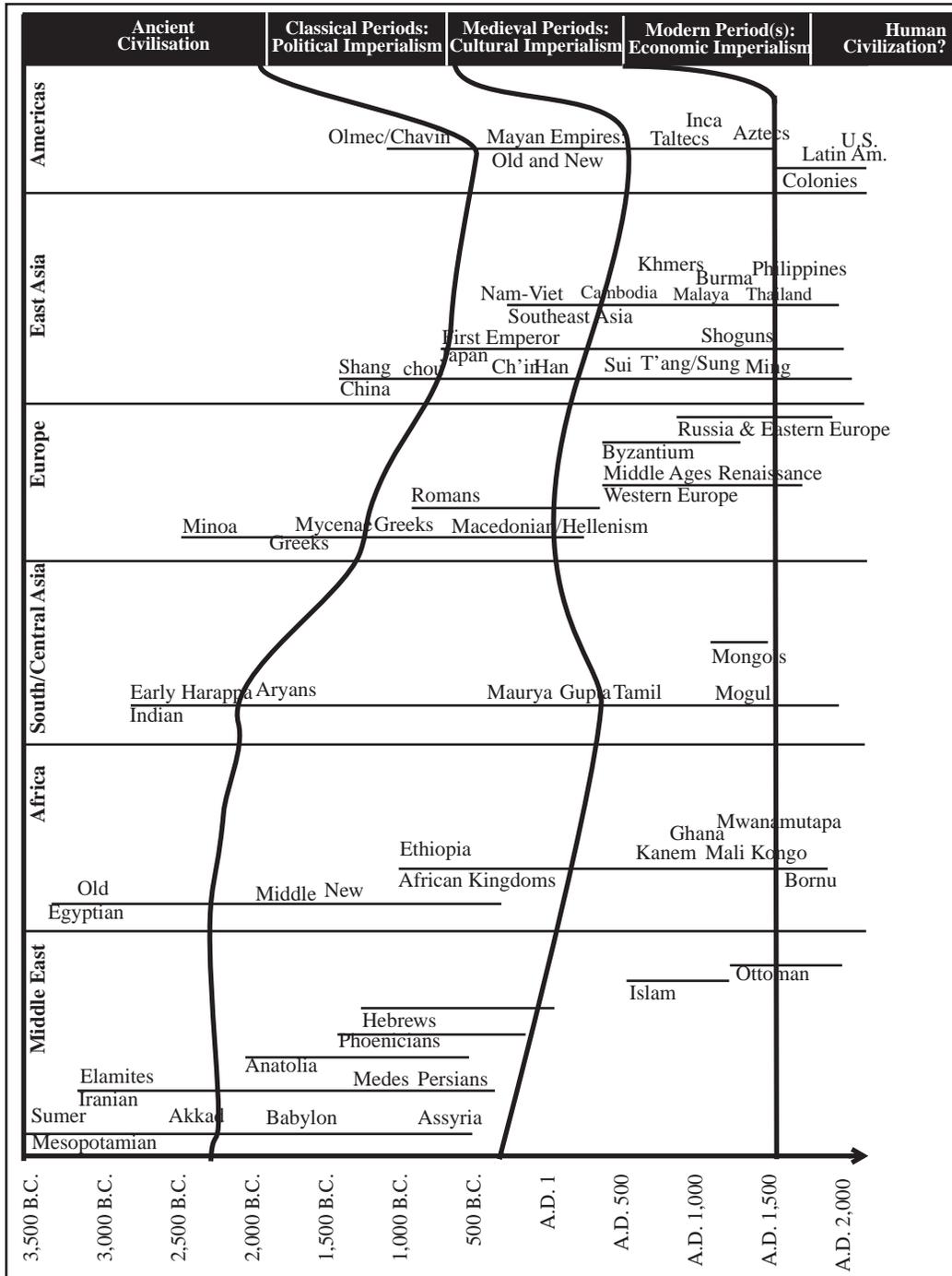


Figure 4: The Increasing Synchronization of Transition Periods from Ancient to Modern Times

transformation.

The spatiotemporal distancing of self and social liberation as manifested in the academically and educationally perpetuated diverging paths of eastern mysticism and western utopianism has only served to limit both their projects, for the global and the self are not separate realities standing apart from one another, but are expressions of the whole-part dialectic. Philosophy, religion, and science, are only partial ideologies resulting from the splitting of an otherwise singular artful and creative human activity. Wisdom, wonder, and experimentation are essential ingredients of any meaningful artistic human creativity. The distinctiveness of both the classical and premodern renaissance traditions involved the intentional blurring of such artificial distinctions between science, religion, and philosophy, between self and society, between economy, politics, and culture, etc., in favor of an alternative defragmented humanist utopistics that was by nature interdisciplinary in thought and action—transcending the dichotomy of thought and action itself. Only such a humanist utopistics can transcend the limitations of supernaturalist, naturalist, and elitist teleologies of world-historical self-change.

Humanity cannot afford an inevitably terrible “next fifty years.” Given the amount of destructive and deadly arsenal amassed in the stockpiles of collective economic empires today, only social movements focusing on building the alternative post-imperial humanist orders in the midst of the intra/inter/extrapersonal here and now can succeed in finding a concrete way out of the structural crisis of imperial and (neo/post)colonial practices. Only such world-systemic social movements by example can point to the rationality of lasting egalitarianism and justice beyond artificial geographic and skin-marked borders. Only utopistic academic practices can de-alienate stratified and antagonized intra/interpersonal structures of academic life which

only serve the perpetuation of truncated career paths. The possibility and the reality of emergence of a *human* civilization rest on tapping into the artful and inventive passions of our ancient creativities as transmitted to us through the reawakening jolts of both eastern and western renaissance humanisms. The earlier jolts were marginalized at the expense of one or another disciplined fragments of human creativity: philosophy, religion, or science. A new humanist renaissance may perhaps avoid such fragmentations of human spirit and accomplish the missions for which the earlier revivals were sparked. The singularity and undisciplinarity of human artful creativity once again recognized, it may perhaps become at last possible to make the building of a *human* civilization itself the subject matter of our creative artful talents. This new humanist renaissance cannot emerge automatically, but can only be a conscious and intentional global movement.

The “United Nations” has called for a “Dialogue of Civilizations.” “What civilizations,” one may ask in turn? Is political domination, cultural conversion, and economic exploitation, exercises in civility? This dialogue would be again a discourse on and with the “other,” not a discourse and dialogue with oneself, collectively and personally. In many ways, the transition from ancient civilizations to the age of imperialism was a transition from civilization to barbarism. It was a transition to colonized identities—political, cultural, and economic. Intrapersonally, the transition involved the splitting of unitary human conscience into waking, sub-, and instinctive realms, corresponding to a splitting of the intellectual, emotional, and the physical human experiences—thanks to the fragmenting effects of social division of labor. Creativity and artful endeavor as the *raison d'être* of human species also split into its fragmented philosophical, religious, and scientific, pursuits. Even the search for al-

ternative human realities split into diverse mystical, utopian, and academic pursuits. All these were made possible by a broader transition from localism to alienated globalism, from the self to the alienated “other.”

Instead of explaining imperialism from social classes, it may be more fruitful to explain social classes from imperialism. What does it mean to be “imperial”? To colonize? Imperialism is an attitude, a mode of relationality. It is a relationship of control, by “self” of the “other.” Whether this takes the form of domination, of conversion, or of exploitation, does not really matter. These all share the same common element. Class relations are forms of imperial relation. Here, the control is by one group of another. Leaving aside economic reductivisms, class relations are not just about economic exploitation, but also about cultural brainwashing and political control. The imperial, the colonizing, attitude is much deeper than relationships among classes; it is indeed its source, its real identity. The imperial attitude exists not only inter/extrapersonally, but also intrapersonally—among one’s selves and identities as well as among persons. The search after “self-mastery” is itself an expression of an imperial, colonizing, attitude towards oneself. It already assumes divisions within oneself, of otherness within oneself. The discourse is still that of control, rather than of understanding. In the discourse of control and “self-mastery,” the “other” is not really eliminated. It is only produced and reproduced in ever newer forms, to be “controlled” again and again. The discourse of control, of imperialism, of colonialism, without and within, does not really do away with the relationship and its manifestations. It only intensifies it, changes its shapes and colors, and resurrects the “other” in ever newer and more formidable forms. The discourse of control can only result in a continuing “struggle of magicians,” of vicious cycles of class struggles

over things. The struggle of the exploited, repressed, suppressed, against the exploiters, repressors, and manipulators, cannot be about things, dogmas, or power. It is the very habituations, fetishizations, and attachments to things, ideas, and powers that is the culprit. Otherwise, the struggle will only be an exercise in a vicious game of musical chairs. Here and now the oppressors become oppressed, there and then the oppressed become oppressors. It is only through the knowledge of the other as being a part of oneself, through the discourse of understanding the other through oneself, that the artificial barriers between the two can be transcended and the opposition reconciled. Dialogue of civilizations cannot advance if the parties do not question their own “civility” through critical self-dialogues, as well as inter/extrapersonal dialogues among themselves.

To “control” other nations, other ethnic or “racial” groups, other gender groups, other classes, other age groups, other “individuals,” “other” students or teachers, is to perpetuate the imperial discourses of domination, conversion, and exploitation. To control the “other” ultimately is to perpetuate the imperial discourse within. The “social” divisions and antagonisms cannot exist and not be perpetuated in the subjective discourses of multiple and colonized identities. Only a paradigmatic shift from the discourse of imperialism to the discourse of self-determination across both groups and persons as well as selves can reverse the world-historical processes that led to the splitting of self and society into alienated realms and each into multiplicities of class and identity antagonisms. Only a world-system of self-determining social units, ultimately of the building blocks of self-determining individualities, can build effective buffers against the restoration of the vicious cycles of barbarisms within and without.

Barbarism and civility are not grand schemes of world-systemic proportions,

played out sometime in the past. They live with and within us, inter/intra/extrapersonally, every day. The horrible shocks of nomadic and “barbarian” invasions have not been eliminated because there are no more nomads around. The absence is only a visual deception. They have only become internalized as potentialities within the fabrics of our selves and imperial societal institutions. Barbarism is now equipped with the most sophisticated technologies of warfare and tools of destruction and political control, with formidable economic institutions and technologies, with unprecedented skills and technologies of cultural propaganda and brainwashing—both eastern and western. Barbarism is a Medusa’s head ready to spring out of the “civilized” boxes of our postmodernities. And because it is so deeply entrenched within us all, individually and collectively, it will be simply impossible this time around in world-historical time lines to destroy “barbarians” without destroying humanity itself. Only discourse of understanding can win the third major barbarian invasion of our lives. We need discourses of post-coloniality, of post-imperiality, of world-historical self-knowledge, so we can identify our barbarism within, *before* they spring out of the box. Before “dialogues of civilizations” we need to acknowledge the reality of “barbarisms” within us, and acknowledge the need for a dialogue in the solitude of our own meditative laboratories.

The discourse of anti-systemicity does not do away with the system, for its own identity is dependent on it. The discourse of antisystemicity is also a discourse of control, of exploitation, of conversion, only in reverse. Only the resurrection of the utopistic discourse from the ashes of both renaissance humanisms, ancient and (pre)modern, can aid us transcend the discourses of coloniality, and exercise understanding in a real and not just philosophical and theoretical ways. We need to reawaken from the ideological dogmas which have

deceived us into believing that the pursuit of utopias was a failure, and have tied us away from exercising utopistic experimentations with alterity here and now. As with the splitting of the societal systemicities, the age of imperialism also brought about a splitting of utopistics into mystical, utopian, and academic paths. Utopistics of the classical period was the utopistics of philosophers. Its humanist utopistics became partial and elitist. Only if philosophers become kings, or kings become philosophers, could the maladies of the unjust society be overcome. It could not and did not work. Medieval utopistics were those of the religious clergy, vested on the authority of a God presumed to be sanctioning their power. It did not work and is still not working. Modern utopistics has been that of scientific socialism, of presumed directionality of nature and society (as “objective” realities) to bring about an inevitable ending of the divided class society and the rise of a just communistic society. This also did not work. The utopistic discourses of the imperialist era, be they philosophical, religious, or scientific, have been discourses of the alienated “other.” The ideal is sought in the exclusive outer.

The ancient world recognized the significance of “Know Thyself.” But lost sight of the world, for it was itself in its infancy, still newly nested in its settled life, and thereby only inwardly curious and experimental. But the neglected global side of human reality, of this-worldly reality, did not serve the ancient world well in protecting it against the inner and outer assaults of barbarism, within and without. It thus crumbled under the greed or iron weapons of the inner and outer invaders. Mysticism of the ancient world gave way to utopianisms of the imperialist era. East gave way to the west, settled life to global imperial nomadism. The “ancient” ways of mysticism ignored the very conditions which led to the failure of these doctrines. Copying the mystical sources of “ancient” religions, apart

from the “social” factors that led to their downfall, may lead basically to repeating the history for not learning the lessons it has offered.

Discourse of postmodern mysticisms and utopianisms, however, are increasingly discourses of blurring predeterminisms, and of nonreductive dialectical synthesis—despite their eclecticism. As the one-sidednesses in physical, intellectual, and emotional mysticisms have broken down, the predeterminisms of economic, political, and culture are being increasingly questioned. What’s more, the academically and educationally perpetuated gap between mysticism and utopianism, a legacy of the transition of the ancient world into the imperialist era, and an expression of ideal aspirations of settled and nomadic life-styles, is being itself questioned.

Why does the “renaissance” conjure images and associations of multifaceted individualities? Both the classical and the early modern renaissances were retrospective yearnings of a divided and no longer “individual” to the possibilities of creative and multidimensional talents latent in humanity of ancient times. The transition to the imperialist era also brought about transitions to one-sided individualities, of political, of religious, of “business” “man.” The typologies of human personality did not spring from thin air, or from the movements of distant stars. They were the result of global movements of terrestrial beings themselves, of the deepening and spreading divisions of labor, and of overdeterminations of various political, cultural, and economic practices during long historical periods of imperial expansion across the globe.

Religion tends to focus on what was, and science on what is. And philosophy perpetuates this dualism. What is needed is a renaissance of the artful and creative attitudes towards reality, of living and being different in a creative way. Philosophy, religion, and science, are only third-truths.

Their synthesis will have to transcend their division, and as such, their very identities as philosophy, religion, and science. Wish, faith, and hope will have to be transcended, as Gurdjieff reminded us. But we need to move beyond creativities of “objective art,” and see our own wishes, faiths, and hopes as being themselves real and objectively constitutive of what might be alternative orders of world-historical reality. We need to learn how to live “as if” we were liberated, and de-alienated—because, that is the only way new world-systems are born. History proves successful transitions were those whose realities were constructed entirely (though in limited scale) in the midst of the old order, and not simply projected theoretically into the future “after” the overthrow of collapse of the old order. If our utopistic experiments have failed in the past, it may not be because the experiments themselves were at fault, but simply because we abandoned our experimentations under the pressure of classical, medieval, and modern imperial ideologies. We failed to realize that the problem could be not with utopistics, but with how we pursued it—in fragmented, haphazard, and half-hearted ways.

The utopistics of ancient space-time is the utopistics of the self. The utopistics of imperial space-time is the utopistics of the other. As mysticisms of self-change broke up into three intellectual, emotional, and physical ways, the utopianism of social change split into political, cultural, and economic reductivisms. The splitting of the two mystical and utopian rivers, perpetuated by the dualist philosophies of our educational and academic training, involved the splitting of their attention and focus, of their energies. The forgetfulness of human mind, of the inability to remember her/himself, is not a cosmological fact, but a socially constructed reality. The inability of the individual to focus on and remember oneself in everyday life, is a world-historically constituted habituation inherited

from centuries of imperial expansionism, of seeking to discover the “world,” to conquer the “other.”

The key here is to be able to see the long-term, large-scale processes of both civility and barbarism, and their dialectic, at work in the intra/inter/extrapersonal here and now. Teachings that separate the self and the world-historical realms of human experience serve the interest of coloniality. The splitting of social knowledge into macro and micro itself serves to conceal the realities of one from the other. It is a double-vision long inherited from the past, still with us today. To dominate, to convert, to exploit, are colonial practices at both world-historical and intra/inter/extrapersonal landscapes of the here and now. The same failure may also emanate from being one-sidedly introversive, a condition which not only breeds today, but also world-historically bred, possibilities for domination, conversion, and exploitation of oneself by others, personally and collectively. As such we have two forms each of these attitudes, overt and covert. Ideologies that separate the social and the self, the world-historical and the intra/inter/extrapersonal here and now, the macro and the micro, reproduce the dualisms which makes it possible to say one thing, but do another: These dualisms, which are much more sophisticated than overt forms of imperialism, are themselves made possible by the separation of three realms of consciousness into instinctive, subconscious and waking consciousnesses from one another. In contrast, conscience requires the possibility of seeing the large and the small at the same time, of seeing the macro and micro at the same time, of seeing the world-historical and the intra/inter/extrapersonal here and now at the same time.

The defragmentation of the split among these lopsided mystical, utopian, and academic fragments of humanist utopistics in terms of the dialectics of part and whole has been and will continue to be a

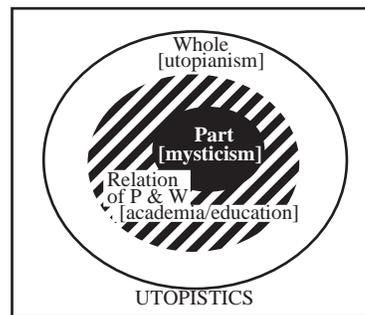


Figure 5:  
The Relationships Among  
Utopianism, Mysticism, and Academia  
in Terms of the Dialectics of Part and Whole

central task for human architecture.

## A CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF IRANIAN REVOLUTIONS

The significance and meaning of the Iranian revolutionary experience during the past two decades, and the sudden series of “shocks” and “surprises” it has delivered to both the west and the east alike can only be appreciated in the context of the general crisis in eastern and western paradigms of world-historical change. Geographically located on the crossroads of the east and the west, Iran has always experienced the interplay of tradition and modernity in exaggerated forms in its history, especially during the contemporary period. The surprisingly sudden emergence, rise to power, and survival of a fundamentalist religious movement in the context of a “rapidly modernizing” nation, was not the only example of how the old and the new have coexisted and interacted with one another in Iran historically. We only should look, not too far back, but to only a few years before the overthrow of the Monarchy, when the Shah, hurriedly pushing forward Iran’s modernization and westernization drive, celebrated the 2500 years of Monarchy in Iran amidst a rapidly “modernizing” na-

tion. Ideologies of revolution in contemporary Iran have in fact all had “surprising” mixtures of religion and science, of old and new, and of east and west in them. They still do.

Events such as those experienced in Iran best illustrate the degree to which the failing eastern and western paradigms are still shaping the future course of development of human life in specific geographical contexts. The recent Iranian “revolution” has not been, within the confines of Iran's history, the only experience in which an oppositional movement has adopted elements from its local traditional heritage. Both during the 1963 anti-Shah demonstrations in Iran, during which Ayatollah Khomeini emerged for the first time as a visible oppositional figure, and during the earlier 1953 Nationalization of Oil Movement under Mossadeq's leadership, the traditional clergy was present and played an important role in influencing the direction of the events. This was even more prominently the case during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11, the most important political event in Iran other than the recent experience, during which the clergy played an important role in using religion and traditional culture for political mobilization of the masses against the Qajar Dynasty. The active participation of the traditional clergy in political affairs in Iran has been due to the very Shi'ite nature of the Islamic code of religious conduct which from the very beginning did not recognize the idea of separation of “church” from “state.” The Shi'ite religious doctrine has always been a protest and political ideology, and has been an important feature of political life in Iran especially after the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century when Shi'ism became for the first time the official religion of Iran.

Use of elements from local traditional heritage has in fact been a common feature of many movements during various revolutionary experiences in both the east or the west. However, what distinguishes the re-

cent Iranian experience from other revolutionary periods in Iran's own past history, and in other parts of the world in modern times one may argue, has been neither the use of traditional eastern or the existence of modern western elements in the revolutionary conflict that ensued. What distinguishes the recent Iranian experience is the enduring manner in which these two aspects of the revolutionary experience have *combined* with one another. But this endurance of the past and the present has come at the expense of alternative futures.

Iranian political culture has certainly been caught for millennia in vicious cycles of philosophical dualisms of the east and the west, of religion and science, of tradition and modernity. But the tensions of the two paradigms have also been the breeding ground of much creativity. An important by-product of this tension has been the forging of an undercurrent revolutionary humanism woven into the fabrics of Iranian culture. “Being and becoming human” is on the minds, words, and deeds of all Iranians, when the need for an ideal order of living without or within is evoked in them. Iranians interpret and judge any religious or secular doctrine or teaching often on the basis of whether it contributes to meeting the basic standards of humanism and creativity.

It is the underlying vast and rich reservoir of revolutionary humanism and creativity deeply hidden *above* the Iranian oil fields that is the true asset of Iranian revolutionary culture and its potential gift not only to Iranian, but also to the regional and global exercises in social change. The liberation of Iran cannot take place apart from the project of human liberation; and conversely, world revolution can only be achieved through radical self-knowledge and transformation of its parts. Omar Khayyam's quatrains have for centuries carried messages, both personal and world-historical, that have for long been woven into the carpet tapestries of Persian

poetry since the last aborted renaissance of Iranian humanism before the onslaught of Mongolian armies. Omar Khayyam's immortalized quatrain below is in and of itself a telling reminder of the transforming power of art and creativity as an alternative to the philosophically perpetuated dualism of religion and science.

*One crowd in religion ponder their way.  
One crowd in science supposedly stay.  
I fear one morning town-crier shouts:  
"The way's neither! O gone astray!"*

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