

The Dissolution of the Social Contract in to the Unfathomable Perpetuity of Caste: Questions of Nature, the State, Inequality, and Sovereignty in Hobbes, Hegel, and Ambedkar

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Abstract: This paper examines Ambedkar's critical view of certain distortions, contradictions, and instabilities in democratic norms, constitutional validity, and citizens' rights in India's secular, constitutional, legal, pluralistic democracy. Through a strident deconstruction utilizing Hegelian resources, the paper exposes the contortions and contradictions underpinning Hindu metaphysics in some of its most abstract texts, namely the ancient Upanishads. Through this deconstructive lens we unpack various aporias embedded in concepts of selfhood that render a truly liberal democratic political notion of citizenship impossible. The paper concludes with the necessity of further research on comparative philosophies of religion and political philosophy to better understand the limits of secular democracy, particularly for minority rights, in different metaphysical and civilizational traditions.

Keywords: Hobbes, Hegel, Ambedkar, caste, philosophy of religion.

Introduction

This paper will use two concepts from Hobbes's political treatise, *The Leviathan* (1651): namely the 'state of nature' and the 'social contract/obedience to the sovereign constitutional state.' Our aim is to show how both are at work, paradoxically, in the Indian caste system: the latter is an archaic phenomenon buttressed by modern Hindu nationalism in which neither liberal, secular, constitutional democracy nor rampant market capitalist society can overcome or eradicate. Regardless of globalization and the dissemination of Western culture and ideals, the phenomenon of caste not only persists and subsists, it deepens and evolves in ever more complex ways. By contrast, for the seventeenth century Hobbes, the social contract and modern idea of the state replaces the state of nature in Western history. But in the postcolonial Indian context, the distinction between the two concepts is blurred.

In the Indian/South Asian context (or in other democratic states where caste persists) the matter is different.¹ India's non-linear temporal paroxysm requires us to reread Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* and other lesser-known works. In particular, we will look at Ambedkar's "States and Minorities: What are Their Rights and How to Secure them in the Constitution of Free India" (1947). Parts of this text form the progenitor of the eventual Constitution accepted by the General Assembly in 1949 post-Independent India. Ambedkar was the chairman of the drafting commission of the Constitution. However, what is missing in the Constitution from this early text is state socialism that guarantees and protects minorities from the 'tyranny of the majority.' This includes strong enforcement of duties to protect against economic exploitation and other forms of discrimination. Beyond that, the preface to this short text by Ambedkar grapples with the very meaning of the concept of 'minority' given that Dalit (formerly known as 'untouchables') as an outside caste suffer to this day from a combination of state violence, legally sanctioned political-economic exploitation, and mob violence from a Hindu nationalist majority. Their plight can be likened somewhere along the spectrum from African-American slavery to pre-Civil Rights Jim Crow segregation to current forms of structural and state-level violence that Black Lives Matter protests. Hence Ambedkar is seeking a revolutionary notion beyond our normal connotations of what minorities are and therefore what their rights should be. He states in the preface:

Soon after it became definite that the framing of the future Constitution of India was to be entrusted to a Constituent Assembly, the Working Committee of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation asked me to prepare a Memorandum on the Safeguards for the Scheduled Castes for being submitted to the Constituent Assembly on behalf of the Federation. I very gladly undertook the task. The results of my labour are contained in this brochure.

The Memorandum defines Fundamental Rights; Minority Rights and Safeguards for the Scheduled Castes. Those who hold the view that the Scheduled Castes are not a minority might say that. In this matter I have gone beyond prescribed bounds. The view that the Scheduled Castes are not a minority is a new dispensation issued on behalf of the High and Mighty Hindu Majority which the Scheduled Castes are asked to submit to. The spokesmen of the Majority have not cared to define its scope and its meaning. Anyone with a fresh and free mind, reading it as a general proposition, would be justified in saying that it is

¹ Just to note, movements are afoot in Western democracies as well to mount legislation to protect against anti-caste discrimination in the diaspora. For example in the British parliament and nascent lobbying efforts by NGOs in the United States, there are ongoing efforts to bring greater awareness to the phenomenon of 'caste' if in fact it cannot be reduced to existing human rights instruments that center race, ethnicity, and indigenous identities. Caste indeed is not only unique to the South Asian context, particularly 'Indian civilization,' it is unique as a concept in comparison and contrast with other forms of descent-based segregation and discrimination that occurs in various countries, histories, and cultures around the world. See this report by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights: <http://www.ncdhr.org.in/publications/>.

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capable of double interpretation. I interpret it to mean that the Scheduled Castes are more than a minority and that any protection given to the citizens and to the minorities will not be adequate for the Scheduled Castes. In other words it means that their social, economic and educational condition is so much worse than that of the citizens and other minorities that in addition to protection they would get as citizens and as minorities the Scheduled Castes would require special safeguards against the tyranny and discrimination of the majority. The other interpretation is that the Scheduled Castes differ from a minority and therefore they are not entitled to the protection which can be claimed by a minority. This interpretation appears to be such unmitigated nonsense that no sane man need pay any attention to it. The Scheduled Castes must be excused if they ignore it. Those who accept my interpretation of the view that the Scheduled Castes are not a minority will, I am sure, agree with me that I am justified in demanding for the Scheduled Castes, all the benefit of the Fundamental Rights of citizens, all the benefit of the Provisions for the Protection of the minorities and in addition special Safeguards.

The memorandum was intended to be submitted to the Constituent Assembly. There was no intention to issue it to the public. But my caste Hindu friends who have had the opportunity to read the typescript have pressed me to give it a wider circulation. Although it is meant for members of the Constituent Assembly, I do not see any breach of decorum in making it available to the general public. I have therefore agreed to fall in line with their wishes.

Instead of setting out my ideas in general terms, I have drafted the Memorandum in the form of Articles of the Constitution. I am sure that for the sake of giving point and precision this method will be found to be more helpful. For the benefit of the Working Committee of the Scheduled Castes Federation, I had prepared certain explanatory notes and other statistical material. As the notes and the statistical material are likely to be useful to the general reader, I have thought it better to print them along with the Memorandum rather than keep them back.

Among the many problems the Constituent Assembly has to face, there are two which are admittedly most difficult. One is the problem of the Minorities and the other is the problem of the Indian States. I have been a student of the problem of the Indian States and I hold some very definite and distinct views on the subject. It was my hope that the Constituent Assembly would elect me to the States Committee. Evidently, it has found men of superior calibre for the work. It may also be because I am one of those who are outside the tabernacle and therefore undesirable. I am not sorry to find myself left out. My only regret is that I have lost an opportunity to which I was looking forward for placing my views for the consideration of the Committee. I have therefore chosen to do the next best thing - namely, to incorporate them in this brochure along with the Rights of Citizens, of Minorities and of the Scheduled Castes so that a wider public may know what they are, may value them for what they are worth and may make such use of them as it may deem fit. (Ambedkar 1947)

This short set of passages is ripe for philosophical interpretation. Here we experience a type of moral, political, and philosophical vertigo through a bizarre collapse of Hobbesian categories in which all these intermingle in the phenomenon of caste: state of nature, hierarchical society, inequality, obedience

to the sovereign state and emergent market society in which equality within each class (albeit inequality between classes based on wealth, property, and incomes) gives way to the inequality of hierarchical castes within each class, i.e. Ambedkar's 'graded inequality.' (Ambedkar 2014, 233-234) Ambedkar's correct intuition is that we need something more than the traditional constitutional (i.e. Western) concepts of the 'minority,' or as he says something 'more than a minority,' to truly deal with the profound nature of this systemic oppression known as the caste system.

We say a temporal paroxysm is at work because we need to probe the complexity of how caste persists in a modern, secular, constitutional, legal, democratic context whose roots are founded in the 'social contract' and the dynamic forces of today's aggressive deregulated market capitalism leading to a profound economic concentration of wealth and massive inequality in Indian society.² We are talking about an impossible simultaneity of the 'state of nature' and the 'obedience to the sovereign state' in which the state is ultimately responsible to protect the equality and liberty of all citizens; but this is a mere fiction, according to Ambedkarite philosophy, which does not see true freedom or liberation until caste is 'annihilated.' In other words, before political and economic reform before or after decolonization, we need a total remaking of society as a whole.³

All the while, the state is becoming increasingly decentralized within the economy while a mob concentration of wealth supports a Hindu nationalist ideology that keeps the caste system in tact while accruing wealth to a handful of individuals and families.⁴ Indian society is past (precolonialism), present (postcolonialism), and future (somewhere between plutocracy and oligarchy), but also something beyond three aspects of time; perhaps a fourth aspect or vector of time needs to be conceptualized to understand the unique historical temporalization beneath the other three. And despite all 'postcolonial' or 'neocolonial' obfuscations of the 'historical present,' the question remains: can Indian society truly treat all individuals as free and equal citizens? If one examines Indian society up close today, and not just from Ambedkar's early to mid-twentieth century context, i.e. from colonization to Independence, does

² India is now number three in terms of the most billionaires behind the U.S. and China. Ninety plus individuals own nearly one third of the monetary value of the country's GDP while nearly seven hundred million people live at the poverty line with extreme lack of proper sanitation facilities and consistent access to electricity. See Amarty and Dreze (2013). On the list of world's billionaires, see this source. Retrieved from: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-05-23/the-10-countries-with-the-most-billionaires>.

³ See chapters 2 and 3 of Ambedkar (2014, 210).

⁴ Obviously the two highest castes represent the smallest percentage of the population – the Brahmins at the highest with about 4% and with the Kshatriyas/warriors they comprise about 20% of the population. Retrieved from: <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/rel100hinduism/2015/11/25/the-caste-system-brahmin-and-kshatriya/>.

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India really fulfill the ideals and aspirations of the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights?

Basically, we need to read Hobbes's classic, *Leviathan* (1651), again while philosophically reconstructing in innovative ways missing dimensions of Ambedkar's critique of caste.⁵ We need another philosophical model/alternate to the purely Western Hobbessian universe to explain the complexity of caste in postcolonial modernity. For example, as mentioned before, we must look at Ambedkar's "State and Minorities" (1947), many parts of which did not make its way in to the Indian constitution of 1949. Perhaps we need a concept beyond the idea of 'minority itself.'⁶ Radical state socialism guaranteed through the Constitution, not parliamentary democracy, let alone dictatorship, did not emerge; but the dictatorship of the caste system persisted through the electoral veins of a secular, liberal, pluralistically, constitutionally ambitious nation. And the concentration of wealth at the top is simply staggering.⁷ Caste is a type of internal-metaphysical-anatomical dictatorship underneath the artifice of electoral politics and the cherished Indian constitution. Ironically, the post-Independence Indian constitution, the drafting of which was chaired by no other

⁵ Truth be told, although Ambedkar spent a lifetime studying Hindu philosophy and religion and was a doctoral student at the turn of the century American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, his dissertation was more anthropological and subsequent higher degrees were in law and economics. See Stroud (2019). No doubt, he was a brilliant polymath and one of the greatest minds of twentieth century Indian intellectual history. But his depth and grounding in Western philosophy was minimal at best, i.e. from Plato to Hegel to the early twentieth century context of Husserlian phenomenology and the mammoth achievement of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Of course that was not his focus and does not detract from his genius as a broad multidisciplinary thinker, social movements leader, and founder of the Indian constitution. For our enterprise, these Western resources are crucial to imagine frontiers beyond what Ambedkar could conceive, or anyone in the twentieth century for that matter – Western or Eastern – when it comes to an unrelenting critique of the caste system.

⁶ Numerical categorization of minorities, for example racial, ethnic, gender/sexuality, in contrast to the non-Latino/Hispanic white (of European and Russian descent), heteronormative majority of Western societies will not suffice. In India, Dalits constitute about 250 million people (regardless if they converted generations ago or recently out of Hinduism into Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism) and tribals/indigenous are roughly 70 million. That is over 300 million and Muslims in general (of any caste) comprise the second largest Muslim population of any country in the world, except Indonesia. That is over 200 million Muslims in India. Do Hindus across the four castes constitute the majority? Of course, at roughly 800 million. But if you only take 20% of that to comprise the top two castes (Brahmans, Kshatriyas) and then aggregate Dalits, tribals and Muslims, the latter groups do not comprise a statistical minority. Far from it. See 2007 data from the Times of India: retrieved from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/OBCs-form-41-of-population-Survey/articleshow/2328117.cms?from=mdr>.

⁷ See again footnote 2.

than Ambedkar himself, has more ambition and progressive measures than its forbearers, namely the American, British, and French constitutions.⁸

For us, the shadow of Schmitt looms for all contemporary attempts at political theory and the philosophy of constitutionalism. But prior to examining the Western political philosophical tradition that spans Hobbes to Schmitt, we must also examine the still relevant, powerfully speculative sections of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: (BB.) SPIRIT, VI. SPIRIT. This astounding section begins with "A. The true Spirit" and passes through "B. Self-Alienated Spirit. Culture, section III. Absolute Freedom and Terror" and ends with "C. Spirit that is certain of itself. Morality, section c. Conscience. The 'beautiful soul,' evil and its forgiveness." (Hegel 1977) Its resources are immense, and some could argue that its mysteries are inexhaustible and will continue to be plumbed indefinitely. Hegel and Kant can always be revisited just like philosophers continue to revisit Plato and Aristotle 2400 years later. My contention is that many of the innovations in continental European philosophy after Hegel could not have been possible without his ingenious creations and perhaps the so-called great moves of later philosophers can be derived from moments in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and some parts of his corpus.⁹

There, Hegel begins to unravel the dizzying dialectical and paradoxical movements that take place after the French Enlightenment, French Revolution, and the Counter-Revolution of the Terror before Bonaparte's dictatorship is established. Of course, Hegel is not writing empirical history; nor are the historical references explicit. Rather, he is interested in the self-conceiving movement of Spirit as these dialectical forms expose their inner-contradictions on their way to a higher sublation (*aufheben*) that anticipates the 'Notion' of Spirit's consciousness of itself, its true self-consciousness as substance. But even the distinction of self and substance is cancelled/overcome and Hegel reaches deep in to the very mystery of what time is, a complex event of movement, which is not simply that of linear time and history.¹⁰ Just as Hegel said of Plato and

⁸ Ambedkar drew from these great Western models when conceiving the basic features and dimensions of the Indian constitution. See the *Introduction* to Thorat and Kumar (2008).

⁹ Even contemporary giants in analytic philosophy find resources in Hegel for their own innovation. One thinks of the work of John McDowell and Robert Brandom beyond obvious specialists on Hegel who are analytically trained, namely Charles Taylor, Robert Pippin, and Terry Pinkard. As for great continental European philosophers, it is hard to ignore the backdrop of Hegel, even vociferous attempts to critique or simplify him, namely Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida.

¹⁰ We are getting ahead of ourselves. After the section on (BB.) SPIRIT comes (CC.) RELIGION and (DD.) ABSOLUTE KNOWING. Only in the dark regions of 'absolute knowing' are the most ambitious and difficult speculative reflections on the metaphysical mystery of time and movement that the West had ever seen. One would have to go back to Plato and Aristotle to find such depths. Hegel himself acknowledges his titanic predecessors in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*: "I can bear in mind that if at times the excellence of Plato's philosophy has been held to lie in his scientifically valueless myths, there have also been times, even called

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Aristotle in terms of 'ecstatic dreaming' and 'true disclosure and positive expression of the divine life,' we can say of Hegel's reflections in the last two sections of the *Phenomenology* carry an uncanny and enduring metaphysical complexity whose fecundity remains untapped. Its destiny and future perhaps await a greater articulation of that complexity by inventing new terms that Hegel himself did not accomplish in the concluding moments of his masterpiece. But this piece is not a study of Hegel in isolation.¹¹

Rather, in trying to understand the metaphysical foundations of Hinduism the religion, we will think analogously about the Horse Sacrifice at the beginning of the *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad* – when death becomes the 'subject' and 'object': a phenomenology of the horse sacrifice constitutes a cosmic event turning death into a being by which to situate the twin pillars of Hindu wisdom, namely the 'brahman' and the 'atman.' Unlike most mythological and religious traditions across world-civilizations death becomes some kind of being whose twisted logic demands inhuman commitments. This Upanishad is perhaps the greatest and longest within the corpus, and there is much to be gleaned in it regarding essential elements and traits that one can read to understand how and why the caste system continues to operate through modern Indian society. Death of course is not a being, thing, or entity in an ontic sense but carries within itself an ontological status.¹² Our hypothesis is that until we get to this deeper understanding, we will not be able to engage in effective discourse about the possibility of 'minority rights' and revolutionary social transformation, i.e. an Indian society without the caste system.

Hinduism is a literal mythology passing itself as a logocentric yet decentered religion, which claims access to a higher essence beyond all reality, and hence is irreducible to any notion of myth as a fictitious amalgam of the human imagination; myth is the intermixture of imagination with an essence that requires some intuition of the real, otherwise it would not be recognizable at all. Hinduism blurs these distinctions in which the metaphysical description of a transcendental reality requires that myth divorce itself from the imaginary fictive trope and hence present itself as wisdom and truth which only religion

times of ecstatic dreaming, when Aristotle's philosophy was esteemed for its speculative depth, and Plato's *Parmenides* (surely the greatest artistic achievement of the ancient dialectic) was regarded as the true disclosure and positive expression of the divine life, and times when, despite the obscurity generated by the ecstasy, this misunderstood was in fact supposed to be nothing else than the pure Notion." (Hegel 1977, 44)

¹¹ Again it's virtually impossible to treat any subsequent thinker after Hegel without consciously or unconsciously having to deal with Hegel himself. Derrida says as much in arguably his most ambitious work, *Of Grammatology*, in trying to set himself apart from everything that came before him: "The hesitation of these thoughts (here Nietzsche's and Heidegger's) is not an 'incoherence': it is a trembling proper to all post-Hegelian attempts and to this passage between two epochs." See Derrida (1974, 24).

¹² All this goes to say that we cannot ignore Heidegger (1963). On the contrary, we must reckon with *Being and Time* down to the depths in an unrelenting manner.

can reveal. Once myth becomes more real than reality, and religion becomes its mechanism to enforce its truth, or to discipline the human mind to accept it so that it is as real as history itself. Only then can we see how powerfully binding Hinduism becomes as a way of life as phantasmagoria and heightened but embodied delusion. No Western concept can contain it – be it secular democracy, political and civil rights, and even the atheistic majorities emerging in some Western societies who are spellbound by a combination of ecological justice averting the apocalyptic event of climate change extinction or Westerners turning to indigenous naturalist spiritualities or Eastern mysticism, say Buddhism. The outsider, say a Western secular mind, cannot penetrate this realm of Hindu metaphysics without peril.

Hinduism requires a suspension of the ordinary, or rather the insinuation of the extraordinary into the ordinary and the ordinary thereby becomes unquestioned. The extraordinary becomes normalized in everyday cultural and institutional practices that permit unjust and unequal relations between human beings. But none of this is possible without a social system based on an aberrational notion that presents domination, humiliation, and inequality as the paradoxical condition of virtue and moral transcendence. And the relations between these terms are non-dialectical, meaning they never lead to a higher synthesis in a single conception or Notion. Ambedkar, for sure, was among the first to uncover this diabolical and sinister underbelly of Hindu society.¹³

Organizational Structure:

In terms of the organizational structure of the paper as a whole, here are our main textual resources:

- Ambedkar's "State and Minorities" and Annihilation of Caste
- Hobbes's 'State of Nature' and the Reason to Embrace the 'Social Contract'
- Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit – "Absolute Freedom and the Terror"
- *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* and the Horse Sacrifice

¹³ In the *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar speaks of the positive fostering of an 'anti-social spirit' or an assertive antipathy towards anything below one's caste: "this anti-social spirit, this spirit of protecting their own interests, is as much a marked feature of the different castes in their isolation from one another as it is of nations in their isolation. The Brahmin's primary concern is to protect 'his interests' against those of non-Brahmins; and the non-Brahmins' primary concern is to protect their interests against those of the Brahmins. The Hindus, therefore, are not merely an assortment of castes, but are so many warring groups, each living for itself and for its selfish ideal." (2014, 246) Eventually, we will open up the dialectical contradictions of selfhood, law, morality, and culture in Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a way to further deepen this Ambedkarite insights. We assert that he is only scratching the surface of the malignancy of Brahman and other sub-castes' forms of supremacy or the 'selfish ideal.'

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Our thesis is that an utter incommensurability between Hindu metaphysics of caste as the basic anatomy of Indian society and the true realization of a secular, constitutional, legal, pluralistic democracy that guarantees the true equality, liberty and dignity of each individual, particularly religious minorities, tribals and Dalit outsider caste, has yet to be surmounted. The incommensurability is then confounded within the *Hindutva* ideological attempts to present Hinduism as diverse, inclusive, peaceful, and accepting of all other world religious faiths (say Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism) because Hinduism transcends normative concepts of religion while concealing the myth that it is and presents as real: namely the need to justify the continuation of the caste system as a moral and spiritual system that is not simply a division of labor.¹⁴ To dissolve this pathological aporia, we prefer the Hegelian term ‘aufheben’ – as in a cancelation, negation of negation, lifting, and raising of the double movement of sides (each side constituting the contradiction with the other in its own unique way) into another whole. The idea is not a simple synthesis but a cancellation of harmful differences in the creation of a positive and healthy complexity. The incommensurable, or the paradox of a caste-based secular, legal, constitutional democracy, must be sublated.¹⁵ Sublation relates to a complex event of movement self-conceptualized beyond all contradictions that beset previous political, legal, and moral shapes of being that descend from our Western Enlightenment historical culture. In short, we can learn from Hegel in our attempt to go beyond Ambedkar.

Reading Hegel’s *Phenomenology* as a lens to interpret Ambedkar’s Preface to “States and Minorities”

In this section we will read Hegel while trying to develop further Ambedkar’s reflections in the preface to “States and Minorities.” There he discusses briefly the paradoxes and limits of applying normal intuitions and concepts of what minorities are and why those concepts fail to capture the status of the Scheduled Castes (Dalits). This in turn forces a rethinking of the constitutional underpinnings of what types of rights and as he says ‘special safeguards’ they should be accorded. We see an undetected resemblance between Ambedkar’s hesitations prior to the final crystallization of the Indian constitution and Hegel’s 1807 context where he deconstructs the self-assurances of the Enlightenment and French revolution, which gave birth to secular, constitutional, legal democracies in the West. Between the Dalit’s self-consciousness as a being other than the typical legal constructions of minorities (say race, ethnicity, religion, or alternative, non-heteronormative gender and sexual identities with Western devices of political and civil rights) and Hegel’s awesome set of interrelated

¹⁴ Ambedkar makes this point clearly. Caste is not simply a ‘division of labor’ but a ‘division of laborers.’ See Ambedkar (2014, 233).

¹⁵ ‘Sublation’ as the English substitute for Hegel’s German term – ‘aufheben.’

movements in self-consciousness, morality, and culture we can illuminate the current modalities of domination and oppression at work in the Indian caste system. Our goal is to prepare the phenomenological-ontological conditions for a radical social transformation of Indian society as a whole.¹⁶

We will not attempt to interpret philosophical and linguistic complexity of the Upanishads because we lack the capacity to read the Sanskrit.¹⁷ Having said that, contributing to scholarship in South Asian studies is not the aim of this work. So let us consider our hermeneutical act as one of an appropriation and juxtaposition with Hegel's text to expand on Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism as he tries to imagine anew the constitutional category of the 'minority' of the Schedule Castes (Dalit/'untouchables'). We are not trying to get the right interpretation of the Upanishads, the so-called 'crown jewel' of Vedic Hinduism, its philosophical essence, which for many constitute one of the greatest and most complex philosophical traditions in the history of human consciousness.¹⁸

¹⁶ Towards the very end of his life, Ambedkar started to think about the relations, similarities, and differences between Buddhism and Marxism as an alternative to both Hinduism and Capitalism. Buddhism is a response to the Upanishadic Horse Sacrifice that gave birth to the Hindu social body. But prior to that, we still need to take care of matters within phenomenology and ontology and hence our use of the phrase - 'phenomenological-ontological.' Otherwise, we have no chance to destroy the metaphysical obfuscations inherent in ancient Hindu wisdom texts. For example, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* opens up with a discussion of the horse sacrifice:

"The head of the sacrificial horse, clearly, is the dawn-its sight is the sun; its breath is the wind; and its gaping mouth is the first common to all men. The body of the sacrificial horse is the year... When it yawns, lightning flashes; when it shakes itself, it thunders; and when it urinates, it rains. Its neighing is speech itself." See *Upanishads* (1996, 7)

Furthermore, "this is brahman's super-creation. It is a super-creation because he created the gods, who are superior to him, and, being a mortal himself, he created the immortals. Anyone who knows this stands within this super-creation of this." (*Upanishads* 1996, 14)

And finally "this innermost thing, this self (ātman) – it is dearer than a son, it is dearer than wealth, it is dearer than everything else. If a man claims that something other than his self is dear to him, and someone were to tell him that he will lose what he holds dear, that is liable to happen. So a man should only regard his self as dear to him. When a man regards only his self as dear to him, what he holds dear will never perish." (*Upanishads* 1996, 15)

¹⁷ To reiterate this is not a work that sits within the technical field of South Asian studies.

¹⁸ Hegel too takes stock of Hindu civilization in his *Philosophy of History* while making a critique of it. Our intention is not to reproduce what some would retrospectively characterize as Hegel's Eurocentric 'racism' in these *Philosophy of History* lectures. The entire non-West for Hegel, which constituted Africa, ancient China, India, Babylon, Persia, Egypt and even the Jews, were part of 'pre-history.' 'Original history' begins with the genius of the ancient Greeks and then passes to 'reflective history' and culminates in Hegel's own speculative 'philosophical' history: the latter is when history is teleologically consummated in a new metaphysical notion of freedom that overcomes the dialectical contradictions of all previous shapes of Spirit, i.e. all previous religions, philosophies, and civilizations. See Hegel (1956).

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Rather, we will turn to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* instead and its presumably exclusive focus on the history of Western philosophy and religion, most notably Christianity. We have to read the (BB.) SPIRIT. Our assumption is that paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the Upanishadic focus on the 'head' of the horse sacrifice relates to speech, which in turn relates to the 'brahman' and 'atman.' The brahman is given transcendental status in the illogical nature of a mortal that gives birth to the ('gods' as superior to them and the 'immortals' who are imperishable) in the act of a 'super-creation.' And the 'atman' is singular, non-relational, interminably finite focus on the self as pure selfishness, which puts the individual self as the alpha and omega of all human concern and that nothing can be 'dearer' including one's own children or wealth. This infintization of the finite burrowing of concern for self is not selfishness in any psychologistic or narcissistic sense. Rather, it is an obsession of what the self even is as itself and this requires detachment from everything, and in the detachment the self is preserved beyond all that perishes. The self is a transcendental being infused with an extreme immorality of indifference as difference of which 'ontic' sciences (sociology, anthropology, political science, and psychology) cannot help us.¹⁹

When we think of these elements while appropriating insights from Hegel's *Phenomenology*, particularly on the self and self-consciousness in relation to culture and morality, we can expand on the intuitive impulses of Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism and its concept of the 'minority' at the dawn of the Indian constitution's birth. Then we can see how an intermixture of the poles of the Hobbesian dichotomy of 'state of nature' and 'obedience to the sovereign' in the formation of the social contract dissolves within a caste-based society passing itself off to others trapped within the system and the rest of the world outside it in terms of a false self-consciousness of a liberal, secular, constitutional, legal, peaceful democracy.²⁰

At least in 1947, Ambedkar was inherently suspicious of the Hindu majority's capability of conceiving an adequate concept and meaning of the term 'minority' and why the Scheduled Castes will require a special set of additional safeguards in terms of rights and therefore the state's duty to protect those rights. We will try to probe the depths of his suspicious attitude by unraveling the paradoxes and contradictions of Hindu metaphysics by way of Hegel's

¹⁹ This is a play on Heidegger's distinction between fundamental ontology and the ontic human sciences in the Introduction to *Being and Time*. See Heidegger (1963, 28, 32).

²⁰ India continues to present itself to the outside world as the 'largest' and 'most peaceful' democracy in the world with the greatest diversity, pluralism, and complexity of any democracy in the world. All the major world religions are present in India coupled with traditional and indigenous tribal groups, different racial groups, and of course the unique complexity of the caste system.

dialectical deconstruction of self, ethics, morality, and culture in one of the most researched sections of the entire *Phenomenology of Spirit*.²¹

Section (BB.) barely gives the reader a chance to prepare before hurling them into the depths of an awesome set of interpenetrating and interrelating reflections. Long before we can even begin to think anew the concept of the 'minority' – with regard to the Hindu context and the Dalit/outsider context for which Ambedkar felt a novel set of constitutional principles would have to emerge – we have to return to those crucial foundational elements of Hindu metaphysics: namely the horse sacrifice, the head as brahman as speech, the brahman itself as the super-creation of gods and immortals from mortals, and finally the ātman as the indwelling of self as pure concern for self above all else but in a non-psychologistic way. Then only can we possibly begin to understand the stranglehold that Hinduism has on Indian society, let alone any kind of democracy that tries to guarantee equality and liberty for all. The minority as an idea within the Hindu context is an Other that cannot be reduced to any simple concept of a numerical minority with special protected rights.²²

There are several main passages in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that will preoccupy the remainder of our time and attention. And then we can try to bring them in to dialogue with both Ambedkar's Preface in "States and Minorities" and the previous passages we offered from the *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad* in a concluding set of reflections.

In the opening pages of (BB.) SPIRIT Hegel states: passages below are full quotations.

The living ethical world is Spirit in its truth. When Spirit first arrives at an abstract knowledge of its essence, ethical life is submerged in the formal universality of legality or law. Spirit, which henceforth is divided within itself, traces one of its worlds, the realm of culture, in the harsh reality of its objective element; over against this realm, it traces in the element of thought the world of belief or faith, the realm of essential being. Both worlds, however, when grasped by Spirit – which, after this loss of itself, withdraws into itself – when grasped by the Notion, are confounded and revolutionized by the insight [of the individual] and the diffusion of that insight, known as the Enlightenment; and the realm which was divided and expanded into this world and the beyond, returns into self-consciousness which now, in the form of morality, grasps itself as the essentiality and essence as the actual self; it no longer places its world and its ground outside of itself, but lets everything fade into itself, and, as conscience, is Spirit that is certain of itself. (Hegel 1977, 265)

²¹ For more on Hegel's thought on ethics and morality, see Pinkard (1996); Pippin (2008); Honneth (2016).

²² Perhaps Levinas's work on the Other and alterity and his critique of fundamental ontology in which ethics is prior to any metaphysics of Being can be helpful in this regard. We defer that project to a future enterprise. In particular his 1963 essay, "The Trace of the Other," can provide us with essential insights and deconstructive maneuvers against traditional notions of self and other and against the lure of any kind of simplistic, uncritical dialectical metaphysics, i.e. prior to Kant and Hegel. See Levinas (1986, 345-359).

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And then in *b. Ethical action. Human and Divine knowledge. Guilt and Destiny* he states:

This ruin of the ethical Substance and its passage into another form is thus determined by the fact that the ethical consciousness is directed onto the law in a way that is essentially *immediate*. This determination of immediacy means that Nature as such enters into the ethical act, the reality of which simply reveals the contradiction and the germ of destruction inherent in the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit itself. For this immediacy has the contradictory meaning of being the unconscious tranquility of Spirit. On account of this natural aspect, the ethical nation is, in general an individuality determined by Nature and therefore limited, and thus meets its downfall at the hands of another. But with the vanishing of this determinateness – which in the form of a real existence is a limitation, but equally the negative element in general and the self of the individuality – the life of Spirit and this Substance, which is self-conscious in everyone, is lost. The substance emerges as a formal universality in them, no longer dwelling in them as a living Spirit; on the contrary, the simple compactness of their individuality has been shattered into a multitude of separate atoms. (Hegel 1977, 289)

And then at the end of B. SELF-ALIENATED SPIRIT. CULTURE he states:

Absolute freedom has thus removed the antithesis between the universal and the individual will. The self-alienated Spirit, driven to the extreme of its antithesis in which pure willing and the agent of that pure willing are distinct, reduces the antithesis to a transparent form and therein find itself. Just as the realm of the real world passes over into the realm of faith and insight, so does absolute freedom leave its self-destroying reality and pass over into another land of self-conscious Spirit where, in this unreal world, freedom has the value of truth. In the thought of this truth Spirit refreshes itself, in so far as *it is* and remains *thought*, and knows this being which is enclosed in self-consciousness to be essential being in its perfect and completeness. There has risen the new shape of Spirit, that of the *moral* Spirit. (Hegel 1977, 363)

And lastly in *c. Conscience. The 'beautiful soul,' evil and its forgiveness* in C. THE SPIRIT THAT IS CERTAIN OF ITSELF. MORALITY he states:

The absolute certainty of itself thus finds itself, qua consciousness, changed immediately into a sound that dies away, into an objectification of its being-for-self; but this created world is its *speech*, which likewise it has immediately heard and only the echo of which returns to it. This return, therefore, does not mean that the self is in essence and actuality present in its speech; for essence is not for it an *it-self* or merely *implicit* being, but its very self. Just as little has consciousness an *outer existence*, for the objective aspect does not get as far as being a negative of the actual self, in the same way that this self does not attain to an actual existence. It lacks the power to externalize itself, the power to make itself into a Thing, and to endure [mere] being. It lives in dread of besmirching the splendour of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself a substantial existence, or to transform its thought into being and put its trust in the absolute difference

[between thought and being]. The hollow object which it has produced for itself now fills it, therefore, with a sense of emptiness. Its activity is a yearning which merely loses itself as consciousness becomes an object devoid of substance, and rising above this loss, and falling back on itself, finds itself only as a lost soul. (Hegel 1977, 399)²³

It would take more than a book, and probably no less than a corpus of works, to scratch the surface of these formidable paragraphs. One could write endlessly in what is offered in these assertions, arguments, and deductions, and also what is in the margins or missing in them. One can try to witness 'beyond the crevice' as Derrida might say in the passage between this Hegelian 'epoch' and all 'post-Hegelian attempts' to think (1974, 24). But we cannot do that here.

We have to find moments in these paragraphs that can help us excavate the deepest intentions and motivations – phenomenologically reduced – in those passages in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad* that are not fully articulated philosophically in Ambedkar's attempted critique of Hindu metaphysics. This will foreground any attempt to think of 'minority rights' and radical social transformation – or the unthinkable, namely India as a new secular, constitutional, legal democracy, which although bans discrimination on the basis of caste, has yet to eradicate the caste system itself.²⁴ Can Hinduism exist without the caste system? For Ambedkar, the answer was no and after a lifelong journey, his answer was a mass conversion to Buddhism. And looking back, it was not sustained or scaled but seems to be one moment in twentieth century post-Independence, postcolonial India.²⁵ In other words, the turn to Buddhism may not provide the full answer.

Let's return to the Hegel passages. We will isolate these words and phrases (which are single quotes in their exact language from his translated text) as we try to imagine an eerie set of family resemblances between the Upanishad's metaphysical concepts and Ambedkar's presuppositions about the Hindu majority's incredulity as to whether the Scheduled Castes (Dalits/untouchables) constitute a 'minority' deserving of special rights. Hegel's words are:

'Living ethical world'

²³ For an excellent commentary, particularly from the twentieth century continental European philosophical context, see the Hyppolite (1979).

²⁴ The Indian Constitution bans discrimination on the basis of caste and untouchability and yet the caste system continues. For the Indian Constitution, see: retrieved from: https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf. See pages 7 and 8 in particular. An interesting project would be comparative constitutional law that sees how different national constitutions deal with minority rights and how most democratic constitutions do not have the conceptual resources to deal with the sociological, anthropological, political and philosophical dimensions of caste and caste inequality, discrimination, marginalization, exclusion and oppression.

²⁵ See Arundhati Roy's Introduction to "The Doctor and the Saint" in Ambedkar (2014, 139).

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'Formal universality of legality and law'

'Realm of culture – harsh reality of its objective element'

'World of belief and faith – the realm of essential being'

'Insight [of the individual]'

'Diffusion of that Insight – Enlightenment'

'Self-consciousness – in the form of morality'

'Conscience'

'Immediacy – Nature'

'Compactness of their individuality'

'Absolute Freedom'

'Self-alienated Spirit'

'New shape of Spirit, the moral Spirit'

'Created world is its speech'

'Self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction'

'Hollow object which it has produced for itself now fills it, therefore with a sense of emptiness'

'Lost soul'

Reading Hegel

The tapestry is so rich – from a theoretical point of view – to imagine an Ambedkarite critique of Hindu metaphysics. First of all, one can ask about the linkage between the Upanishadic cosmic sacrifice in which speech emerges as primary, as soul, living, breathing being and hearing in AND lost-ness in general: that is the silent voice or the internal one either by the unconscious, memory or in silent mediation during wakeful consciousness relates to some 'self' seeking itself. The fact that the self can hear itself speak at all is a mystery.²⁶ The self is an illusion that has to posit itself as a possibility of unification amidst its own internal impossibility of semblance and gathering; it persists for no reason, with no possibility of achieving a goal, but it persists and it doesn't reflect on the motion of that persistence because it does not relate to it (the motion) at all. That is the issue: a dispersion at the origin that tries to recollect itself at any moment in order to continue by pretending there is an origin to begin with. We will

²⁶ We have to bracket, phenomenologically speaking, which means to reduce it and avoid any automatic intuition from the sensible, empirical realm without giving into imaginary impulses, what this statement could possibly mean. The reduction does not intend to give way to myth in so far as we are trying to understand the experience of the essential features of the 'thing' in question, namely the 'self.'

bracket for a moment that this original presence is linked to the cosmic body of a horse sacrifice, and that speech is literally this act of sacrifice.

Perhaps, we can hypothesize that the hermeneutic circle that presupposes a self²⁷ to begin with is not only flawed; it is dangerous and harmful for reasons we have to explore in this reading of Hegel while considering the non-Western context of Hindu civilization. For the birth of an unbounded self is also one that searches for itself, and therefore a birth that is not unified but split apart in multiple dimensions. And then the self tries (ultimately in a futile manner, beyond the innocence of its first attempt to be 'itself') to collapse its mirror image into an 'external occurrence' in the absolute freedom of individuality. Individuality is the horror and the possibility of being, raw, unbounded, untotalized, and naked; it is an exposure that cannot be tolerated because from that moment birth and death have to be accounted for too, and yet they ('birth' and 'death') accompany the 'self' seeking itself. And that is a historical aberration in Hegel's phenomenological treatment of history. But 'history' is not the philosophical object of inquiry.²⁸

In the process of trying to implode the hermeneutic circle, through culture and morality, the self or 'it' (or the 'self' or it) fails to truly relate obedience to universality of law with the messy reality of indiscriminate behavior and action and perhaps the thoughts and feelings embodied in them; conscience is not something natural in order to determine right and wrong, but rather is the after-effect, or afterglow of guilt, when a self realizes that it is responsible for itself prior to the external intervention of law. Guilt itself is not a thing because its origin is nothing but dispersion. The self is a myriad picture, a mirage that will always attract but never appear. It is truly lost but not because of something primordial; because otherwise it would have some semblance of itself to keep searching for its other parts to become one; and the more it searches for itself, the more exclusive it becomes in trying to recognize the truth (Notion) of its own self-consciousness, consciousness of what it truly is. Speech is the 'echo' of

²⁷ Sometimes we will use the term 'self' as the subject of the sentence; but that does not mean we assume any meaning to it. So if the reader sees the term with single quotes or not, do not assume the author has attributed any meaning to it. All sentences need subjects and predicates. We must conduct more research on the early Derrida's reading of Husserlian phenomenology in our continued attempts to deconstruct the Hindu metaphysics of caste, speech, soul and breath.

²⁸ This is not to say that the philosophical concept of history in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in contrast to the *Philosophical Lectures on World History* are not of paramount importance as a horizon for understanding being in general. We rely heavily on Hegel's great formulations in our deconstruction of Hindu metaphysics, but also seek our own path and own invention of philosophical concepts that are irreducible to Hegel's awesome terminology. Let's not forget that Hegel is a European philosopher from the early nineteenth century, someone who never experienced anything outside that specific European context. See Stewart (2011).

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shadow of what it really is, and never a true revelation of what self is.²⁹ But as we shall see in the Hindu caste system this occurs at the expense of others while comprising the primordial moment of the genesis of all supersensory reality itself.

The singularity of a self – as absolute creation and freedom in moral form – is the question. But in giving the law to itself, laws that are manufactured by the limits and flaws of human cognition and not divine dispensation, the self flounders in applying to itself any possible way to deal with the futility of self-realization through the law as the self exists in lawless nature: nature, law, and self will always try to reconcile themselves in a higher unified truth but will also succumb to exhaustion, bordering on obsolescence. Law is a fiction that always tries to become more real than nature itself in attempting to tame nature, which always surprises. The ‘self’ reconciling its ‘self’ with its ‘self’ as its ‘self’ leads to the infinite regress, which Hegel already knew. Mistaking the process of transcendence at the expense of the other within one-self is pathetic to say the least, and even more egregious an unconscious waste of time. As we shall note, the self-centric and ‘selfish ideal’ at the heart of Brahmanical supremacy in Ambedkar’s critique of caste exacerbates all the contradictions that Hegel diagnosed in the Western Enlightenment. Without the Enlightenment, there would be no individual secular morality, law, and hence democracy.

This circular strangulation of self with its maximum push towards limitless freedom *and* the rationalization of law that could contain the expansion of the self’s growth through reason, discipline, and efficiency runs against many contradictions. This occurs not only because the self seems isolated in its own recognition of some outside being called ‘it’s’ ‘self’ independent of the contradiction, or at least distinction, between law/order/reason and the reality of unpredictable, violent nature. The ‘self’ searching for ‘its’ ‘self’ in this non-circular and non-linear motion is morose at best. The self is and has been tortured to seek ‘itself,’ deny ‘itself,’ come to grips with this forsakenness, and search again; some dubious intuition of ‘time’ is partly guilty for this torture while it escapes any possible conceptualization by the self about time, let alone the relation between self and time.³⁰

²⁹ It would be very interesting to read these particular sections in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* with Derrida’s early corpus, particularly *Of Grammatology*, on his equation of speech with metaphysic of present as presence, self-sameness of self with the soul, and the dominance of speech over writing in the ‘logocentric and phallogocentric’ over-determination of Western identity and thought.

³⁰ Hegel will return to the self-time relation, particularly with regard to Spirit’s true self-consciousness of itself and the ‘Notion’s time’ in the last few sections of ‘Absolute Knowing,’ the last chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See Hegel (1977, 487-493). Heidegger, for his part, will try to deconstruct Hegel on time by equating him with the inauthentic, vulgar, linear notion of time as passing of ‘now’ points. See Heidegger (1963, 484-486). Whether Heidegger succeeds in this critique and therefore succeeds in separating his project from Hegel’s is another matter for another project. In his 1931 lecture on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,

At least Hegel, the great thinker, is concerned with what this movement means in its ontological fullness: that is, he is asking in some way or another what the meaning of such an absurd movement is, and he will not stop with the subjective view point of any human being. The human being is the one 'thing' that has to be overcome; and the logic of 'morality' has to be overcome as well if in fact it emanates from human beings trying to imagine the relation between the human as an isolated object and the divine as the supersession of all objects; it is a transcendental will (transcending the human) as the 'ethical life as Spirit in its truth' as something that can be grasped, articulated, announced, and consecrated in speech, symbol, or auspicious occasions of celebration. Ritualized inscription through action, belief, or speech does not mean the Living Spirit is revealed as the substance of its self-consciousness and the self-consciousness of its substance. The human being as self-created law beyond natural law is more ambitious than any deduction of law from divine will in nature. [The relation between the human intuition of the relation between human and divine and the non-human intuition of that relation is not the issue.]

Because 'it' or the 'self' – whatever 'it' 'is' – can try to reconcile consciousness of itself with an external reality that is called the messiness of culture: the latter includes therefore all human interactions by speech and writing to become other than its own self-representation, but that always seems to go wayward. And the embarrassment of being a human being starts to fill up, filling up the void with more delusions that what is actually happening is not really happening and that something else is actually happening. Hence 'it' (whatever 'it' 'is') 'is' that which does not give up. The motion does not seem to end, and motion would seem to appear to engulf any notion of beginning and end while denying a static eternity of the very thing that is being discussed.

Heidegger is not so hasty in trying to separate his project from Hegel's. He is a bit more nuanced and guarded in trying to accord Hegel respect while also saying his – Heidegger's – own project is irreducible is fundamentally different, not greater, but just different. He states: "To summarize in the form of theses, we can say: For *Hegel*, being (infinity) is also the essence of time. For *us*, time is the original essence of being. These are not theses which can be simply played against each other antithetically. Rather, the term essence [*Wesen*] says something fundamentally different each time, precisely because being is understood differently." See Heidegger (1994, 146). Not only do we disagree with Heidegger's characterization of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on the time-Spirit relation, we disagree with his formulation of Hegel ['being (infinity) is also the essence of time'] in the 1931 lecture. We reserve a treatment of this dispute for a later work. We will say that this is not tangential or incidental to the current project underway, i.e. the critique of caste. We must work through the time, being, self, Spirit, Dasein relations in both Hegel and Heidegger in our destruction of the metaphysical ontology of Hinduism and its consecration of the caste system; our purpose *here* is to extend and deepen Ambedkar's critique and attempted overcoming of the caste system. One can only imagine how complex questions of birth, death, rebirth, transmigration, Brahman, Atman, become and why the Western categories available in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Heidegger's *Being and Time* are limited in that regard.

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When Ambedkar questions why the Hindu majority cannot accept the idea of the Schedule Castes as a 'minority' and even if they did, they cannot define the 'scope and meaning' of minority-ness, then he asking a very fundamental question about the nature of individuals claiming to declare and defend equality and liberty. But we can ask – what comprises the individual when one is dealing with a caste system: a hierarchy of unrelated, self-defined groupings of human beings that have no basis in nature to define such difference? The Upanishad speaks of an extreme detachment and indifference in the Brahmanical identity – to search for the 'self' for nothing is more 'dear' (neither 'progeny' nor 'wealth') than the 'self' itself. But this self-proclaimed, prioritized highest self, the living speech from the head of the horse that was sacrificed, and the being that created the 'gods' and the 'immortals' deserves greater scrutiny. A phenomenological destruction of this will is what is necessary before talking constitutionally about equalities, liberties and rights between citizens. This strange 'will to power'³¹ that moralizes transcendence through detachment while it metaphysicalizes the essence of reality, truth, and being – through mythic cosmogony – as the guarantor of the 'super-creation' must be dismantled.

The four quoted paragraphs from Hegel can help us in this task. By reading those passages we can slowly uncover the myriad dimensions of Brahmanical supremacy, which cannot exist without the persistence of caste. But this requires new philosophical categories that Hegel did not articulate in so far as his investigation was a philosophical *aufheben* of the Western historical context from the ancient Greeks and Romans to his early nineteenth century context in continental Europe. For Hegel, something about the birth of the 'individual' in secular modernity is truly problematic. Once the individual is born, the dispersion of a 'multitude of atoms' sets in. Each one is out for itself, sheltered with the illusion of the law, as if they have transcended the state of nature and entered the protection of the social contract. Whereas, in the Hindu context, the

³¹ In reference to Nietzsche's phrase, which in many respects can be reinterpreted and expanded on in so far as we are on the hunt for the deepest pathological roots that underpin Brahmanical identity as a kind of merging of the 'will to self' with a profound detachment from everything, including nothing, and hence more than an 'ascetic ideal.' Nietzsche's critique is focused on institutional Christianity and the birth of the good and evil distinction in all Western moral and metaphysical systems. He states: "It is absolutely impossible for us to conceal what was actually expressed by that whole willing that derives its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animalistic, even more of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from appearance, transience, growth, death, wishing, long itself – all this means, let us dare to grasp it, a *will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental prerequisites of life, but it is and remains a *will!*... And, to conclude by saying what I said at the beginning: man still prefers to *will nothingness*, than *not* will..." See Nietzsche (2007, 120). Although we are focused on Hegel's critique of morality, one cannot ignore Nietzsche's critique of what he thought was everything prior to them. Both can be summoned in further reflections on the Ambedkarite critique of the Hindu metaphysical roots of the caste system and what that means for moral and ethical reflective critique.

cosmological origin is that of an original individual co-valent with a primordial sacrifice, which consecrates as its diabolical morality – love of self in the search for self over anything else. No other human criteria can be used to judge this quest by the highest individuals, the Brahmans, through the contingency of human birth, which in turn gives them the metaphysical privilege to search for the individual self. That privilege, however, is maintained through the separation and more than that disdain, repulsion, oppression, and enslavement of the outsider caste – the Dalits – who cannot be seen or enter into the same space as the highest self, namely the Brahmanical space. Hence any simplistic notion of the ‘minority,’ let alone ‘minority rights,’ completely dissolves in the face of this complex monstrosity.

The Dalit, which is equated with the ‘impure’ and relegated to the most impure tasks (the collection of excrement and the burning of bodies), is contrasted with purity of the moral Self – the latter is the supersensory consciousness of the transmigration of the soul prepared by ritual laws, dietary restrictions, and investment in the wisdom of the Scriptures, namely the Vedas, Upanishads, epics, and various schools of Hindu philosophy. One cannot exist with the other, and the two worlds like Hegel’s characterization (‘the realm of culture in its harsh objectiveness’ and the ‘realm of faith, belief and essential being’) comes in to clash with one another. But it is not a fair fight. In the system of Hinduism, the upper caste always has the upper hand.

In Hegel’s model, the two worlds of the messiness, mortality, frailty, and flaws of the real world of ‘culture’ clashes with the pure other-worldliness of ‘belief, faith, and essential being.’ But the distinction collapses and is overcome when ‘grasped by Spirit’ in the ‘Notion,’ which then ‘confounds and revolutionizes’ the profound ‘loss’ that ensues from the collapse of the distinction. The result is the birth of the ‘insight’ (which emanates from the ‘individual’) and the ‘Enlightenment’ is the ‘diffusion of this insight.’ Let us compare and contrast with the state of affairs of Hindu speculation grounded in its ancient texts, such as the Upanishads, which Ambedkar thinks is antithetical to any notion of a fair and just democracy: one that can guarantee minority rights, particularly for a group whose long-standing oppression one can argue is unmatched in the history of human civilizations. When human beings are equated with the impurity of excrements and dead bodies (these Eastern bodies outside their sacred construal in the Abrahamic faiths, which require burial and not cremation), then what else can one say in terms of the grossest and most inhuman devaluation of human beings?

In the system of Brahmanical supremacy, there is no original distinction of ‘culture’ on the one hand and the ‘faith, belief, and essential being’ in the other-worldly realm on the other. The ‘insight of the individual’ is not born out of a loss when a distinction collapses and the clash of two worlds gives way to a ‘diffusion’ of practical self-reflection: for the Enlightenment is nothing but the constant dispelling of myth and superstition in the attempt rationalize publically

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what can be verified through reason what is best for human relations and society, namely secular law and policy. The Enlightenment delivers to human beings the ultimate self-responsibility for guaranteeing their own progress towards justice and liberty rather than relying apocalyptically on a messianic savior who can deliver human beings from their depravity and sin in the state of nature. In the Hindu context, the matter is a bit more convoluted, taking aspects of this progression of Spirit in Hegelian phenomenology and turning it around within itself.

The primordial sacrifice is a cosmic-mythic confusion in which 'culture' and individuality of castes emerge. Metaphysical transcendence in the selfish quest of self for itself (with total disregard for others but also presupposing the labor and oppression of others) so that one is free to engage in the quest does not lead to 'insight' into moral ideals to govern human relations. Rather, the 'individuality' is a tyrannical, autocratic entity that asserts the teleological goal of self-discovery through extreme detachment from the senses; for only in the senses can impurity set in and impurity is the evil that must be guarded against to protect its migration to the next body until it achieves the bodiless Enlightened state; that is when death itself is overcome because the passage is no longer back to the world of bodies. But this can only take place if other bodies are marked from the beginning through the illusory and arbitrary nature of karmic cycles as sinful, evil, and demonic. The present state of the body is given its meaning from a past soul, which then predetermines or forecloses the chance for upward mobility in this life-time, let alone another. Reducing the entire stretch of a life-time (inclusive of birth to death) in an eternal moment of impurity, means the revision of the past life of sin and foreclosure of a future life from bondage, is impossible: a contorted and twisted eternal return presents itself.³² Therefore Enlightenment is not the Hegelian paradox of the individual using their own insights (rather than divine, metaphysical, or transcendental myth giving the law to humans from God as the Abrahamic faiths declare) to achieve perfect, communal, ethical life that is Spirit. For Hegel, this does not occur in the stage of history of the Enlightenment, Democratic Revolution, and Counter-Revolution of the Terror. Although individual conscience is born, so is the 'lost soul' – and the Kingdom of God – cannot be realized in the secular, rational law.

This is not the case in the Hindu structure of caste, which continues to exist within the confines of secular, constitutional, and legal democracy. For

³² Perhaps we can compare the Hindu mechanics of karmic cycles of sin and transcendence with Nietzsche's reflections on the eternal return. This is what Heidegger says is Nietzsche's culmination of the metaphysical tradition rather than its overcoming. See Heidegger (1982, 159). In other interesting task would be a deconstructive reading of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche in these volumes while comparing and contrasting with an innovative Ambedkarite critique of the central feature of all Hindu metaphysics: the transmigration of the soul and the mystery of reincarnation.

Ambedkar, one would have to first destroy the hierarchy of castes to reconceive individuality not on the basis of specious differentiation of the value of different identities based on a ranking of purity. One must first recognize that a class of people are oppressed and constitute the minority. And then one has to reconceive their equality and dignity from within their own articulation; this requires hearing and listening to their needs. One has to plumb why special provisions will be needed for them to succeed in the current generation by recompensing for the history of their atrocious oppression by the hands of the upper castes, uppermost of which are the Brahmins. Ambedkar's prolegomena to a constitutional framework requires that we read Hegel's sections very carefully but outside the Western context from which they are extrapolated.

This means we need new philosophical insights, intuitions, and ultimately categories beyond what Hegel was able to articulate in his early nineteenth century work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We are in search of the deepest motivations and intentions – phenomenologically reduced – beyond any human intuitions of what the horse sacrifice, the Brahmanic 'super-creation,' and the atman detachment of self from anything more 'dear' to itself than itself to understand why the system of caste persists. Then only can we begin the resumption of the Ambedkarite task of 'annihilating' caste once for and all. And perhaps then, only, can a true democracy be said to exist in the Indian context specifically, and perhaps South Asia in general where caste continues to subsist.

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