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# B.R. Ambedkar, Franz Boas and the rejection of racial theories of untouchability

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses Ambedkar's challenge to racial theories of untouchability. It examines how Franz Boas' ideas about race, via Alexander Goldenweiser, influenced Ambedkar's political thought. Ambedkar is situated as a thinker aware of larger changes taking place in Western academia in the early twentieth century. During his time at Columbia University, Ambedkar familiarised himself with ideas that rejected the fixity of identities and racial hierarchies. Ambedkar, following Boas, rejected the idea that Untouchables's place in society was determined by their supposed racial inferiority. Instead, he argued that untouchability was a cultural problem that could be fought and eradicated.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Boas, Goldenweiser, race, caste, untouchability, Annihilation of Caste, untouchables

# B.R. Ambedkar, Franz Boas and the rejection of racial theories of untouchability[1]

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This paper analyses B.R. Ambedkar's challenge to racial theories of untouchability. I pay particular attention to how Franz Boas' ideas about race, via Alexander Goldenweiser, influenced Ambedkar's political thought. With this, I situate Ambedkar as a thinker aware of larger changes taking place in Western academia in the first half of the twentieth century. At this time, there was an abandonment of positivist theories that located social sciences as a continuation of natural sciences. In short, positivism explained the world through natural laws that would fit any given society despite specific contexts or cultures. This type of thinking informed notions of racial superiority and evolutionist theories over the world. However, at the turn of the twentieth century important scholars at Columbia University such as John Dewey and Franz Boas began to challenge such notions.[2] By linking Ambedkar's writings with Boas',

[1] This article was possible due to an Early Career Research Fellowship funded by the Leverhulme Trust. I would like to thank Kama Maclean and the two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments. This essay also received precious feedback from Laura Loyola, Chris Moffat, Sunil Purushotham and Anil Varghese. All errors are mine.

[2] The legacy of Dewey's ideas on Ambedkar has been studied by several authors including Arun P. Mukherjee, 'B.R. Ambedkar, John Dewey, and the meaning of democracy', in New literary history, Vol. 40, no. 2 (2009), pp.345-370; Christophe Jaffrelot, Dr. Ambedkar and untouchability: Analysing and fighting caste (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005); Meera Nanda, Prophets facing backward: Postmodern critiques of science and Hindu nationalism in India (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003) and Scott R Stroud, 'Pragmatism and the pursuit of social justice in India: Bhimrao Ambedkar and the rhetoric of religious reorientation', in Rhetoric Society quarterly, Vol. 46, no. 1 (2016), pp. 4-27.

I show that during his time as a student at Columbia, Ambedkar familiarised himself with ideas that rejected the fixity of identities, societies and racial hierarchies. Throughout the essay, I show how Ambedkar, at different stages in his career, put into practice similar concepts to the ones used by Boas to condemn the practice of untouchability. In other words, Ambedkar rejected the idea that the identity and place in society of Untouchables was determined by their supposed racial inferiority. Instead, Ambedkar emphasised the importance of culture, which in Boas' vision included the environment, psychology and language. These elements were key in the construction of identities and societies. Ambedkar adopted this mode of thinking to argue that untouchability was not fixed or hereditary. It was a cultural problem that could be fought and eradicated.

The essay will be divided in four sections. First, I will make a brief introduction into the intellectual context where Boas was writing against positivist and naturalist understandings of society. Second, I will turn to Ambedkar's rejection of racial theories of caste. Here I claim that he was inspired by the work of Boas. Rejecting racial theories allowed Ambedkar to attack caste and untouchability in a way that was different from other Indian leaders of the likes of Jyotirao Phule and M.C. Rajah. Third, I will show how Ambedkar constructed an argument highlighting how the structures of individuals or groups in societies were determined by the cultural and psychological circumstances surrounding them. With this, Ambedkar believed that untouchability could be overcome through cultural change, such as conversion. While still influenced by a Boasian notion of culture, the third section also shows some of the intellectual breaks between Ambedkar and Boas. In particular, they differed in their understanding of psychology and its role in social change. Finally, the last section offers some concluding remarks and points to new connections between modern anthropology, Ambedkar's thought and the field of global intellectual history.

**Anthropology, Ambedkar and Boas via Goldenweiser**

Ambedkar's unique analysis of untouchability comes from his years as a student at Columbia University. Ambedkar's decision to go to the USA was unusual. At the time, Indians studying abroad usually preferred Britain rather than the United States. Yet with the support of the Gaekwad of Baroda, Ambedkar went to New York.[3] American academia was gaining importance in this period. Furthermore, the borders of academic disciplines such as sociology, psychology and anthropology were being redefined in America in a very different way than in Britain and its colonies. It is in this context where Ambedkar's academic genealogy becomes relevant.[4]

Ambedkar arrived in New York in 1913, finding an exciting intellectual milieu. As noted by Eleanor Zelliot, Columbia University was in its golden age.[5] Important figures such as James Shotwell, Edwin Seligman, John Dewey and Franz Boas were at this time working at Columbia and were on the way to leaving a permanent mark in American academia. The most prominent of these intellectuals were Dewey and Boas whose influence was expanding. Dewey gained worldwide prominence with his writings about pragmatism. Boas became widely known as the father of modern anthropology and set a trend in the way communities across the globe were to be studied.[6] While there have been numerous works focusing on Ambedkar and Dewey, not much has been said about the intellectual relationship between Boas and Ambedkar. Tracing this connection is very important. In a recent article, Torres-Colon and

[3] See Eleanor Zelliot, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Untouchable movement (New Delhi: Blue Moon Books, 2004), p. 64.
[4] For more on the way anthropology developed in India see Patricia Uberoi, Nandini Sundar and Satish Desphande (eds), Anthropology in the East (New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2010). For an overall view of the changes in American anthropology see the work of George W. Stocking such as Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968); Delimiting Anthropology: Occasional Essays and Reflections (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).
[5] Eleanor Zelliot, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Untouchable movement, p. 65.
[6] See Marshall Hyatt, Franz Boas, social activist: The dynamics of ethnicity (New York: Green Wood Press, 1990); Anthony Darcy, 'Franz Boas and the concept of culture: A genealogy,' in Diane J. Austin-Broos (ed), Creating culture: Profiles in the study of culture (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 3-17; and Vernon J. Williams Jr., Rethinking race: Franz Boas and his contemporaries (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1996).

Hobbs have noted that Boas and Dewey had common intellectual interests.[7] Their work acknowledged each other and dealt with similar issues. Dewey and Boas even co-taught a seminar during 1914-1915. These were the precise years when Ambedkar was at Columbia.[8] Torres-Colon and Hobbs also show that there was an intellectual interbreeding between these two traditions.[9] They trace how different American anthropologists, coming from the Boasian school, were influenced by Dewey. Shifting the focus away from Western intellectual history, I trace the way that Boas' ideas were used by Ambedkar. I propose that Ambedkar's rejection of race as a determinant of social hierarchy exhibits the influence of Boas. This exercise will bring a new perspective on the way Ambedkar's ideas about untouchability have been studied so far. It will also pave the way to larger connections between Ambedkar and other intellectuals, apart from the nationalist interlocutors he is usually associated with.

Ambedkar was a student at Columbia from 1913-1916. His main object of study was economics, but Ambedkar did not limit himself to this discipline. Ambedkar's student records at Columbia show that he took courses in Sociology, Politics, Philosophy, History and even two courses on Anthropology that lasted a whole academic year. From 1915 to 1916, Ambedkar attended the course 'General Ethnology: Primitive Man and Physical Environment' and 'General Ethnology: Primitive Religion, Mythology and Social Organisation'.[10] Alexander Goldenweiser led these courses and it is here where we can establish a connection between Ambedkar and Boas. Goldenweiser was one of Boas' first generation students.[11] After working in Columbia under Boas' wing, he went to establish an anthropology department at the New

[7] Gabriel Alejandro Torres-Colon and Charles A. Hobbs, 'The Intertwining of Culture and Nature: Franz Boas, John Dewey, and Deweyan Strands of American Anthropology', in Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 76 (2015), pp. 139-162.
[8] Ibid., pp 142.
[9] Ibid..
[10] Ambedkar's coursework at Columbia was collected by Frances W. Pritchett. A basic list may be consulted in 'Courses Taken at Columbia', accessed 17 February 2017, http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/timeline/graphics/courses.html
[11] Wilson D. Wallis. 'Alexander A. Goldenweiser', in American Anthropologist, Vol. 43(1941), pp. 250-255.

School for Social Research where he taught prominent figures of modern anthropology such as Ruth Benedict and Leslie White whom, like Ambedkar, also questioned the importance of racial theories throughout their work.[12] Goldenweiser's life work focused on the Iroquois tribe but he wrote extensively on issues regarding anthropological methods. Such writings reflected a great deal of the ideas of his mentor, Franz Boas.

In the early twentieth century, Boas was changing the way anthropology was being practiced. Boas compiled most of this ideas in The Mind of Primitive Man (1911) where he challenged the racial typologies of the day that attributed fixed mental and physical characteristics to specific races. He rejected evolutionist theories and highlighted the importance of history, culture and psychology in human life. Boas believed that culture encompassed material, social and symbolic realms of human life. He argued that there were multiple cultures in the world which were historically specific and linked to particular circumstances. For instance, Boas attributed the political domination of Europeans in the world through numerous factors. He noted that the technological advances in Europe came from the knowledge developed by other cultures around the world. He claimed that the decline, and eventual colonisation, of groups such as the indigenous population in the American continent was linked to germs and disease rather than racial superiority or a more advanced state of evolution. For Boas, 'historical events appear to have been much more potent in leading races to civilization than their innate faculty, and it follows that achievements of race do not without further proof warrant assumption that one race is more highly gifted than another'.[13] In other words, human difference was, fundamentally, cultural rather than racial. Similarly, cultures did not represent a timeline of the stages of development of human civilization. Boas' paradigm

[12] The first generation of Boas students included people like Robert Lowie, Edward Sapir, Melville Herskovits and others. All of them went to establish anthropology departments in institutions such as Berkeley, Pennsylvania and Chicago. See Sydel Silverman, 'The Boasians and the Invention of Cultural Anthropology' in Fredrik Barth (et al.), One Discipline Four Ways: British, German, French and American Anthropology (Chicago, 2005), p. 263.

[13] Franz Boas, The Mind of Primitive Man (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944), p. 16.

then had two main threads. The first one was historical. It traced processes that explained the distribution of cultural traits. The second thread was psychological. It focused on how different cultures shape the minds of individuals and how different cultural traits fit together.[14]

Boas criticism against racial theories of civilisation can be found throughout his work. Of particular importance is Boas' rejection of racial theories justifying anti-Semitism. Being Jewish himself, Boas experienced this type of discrimination both in Germany and in the United States. One of his more forceful arguments against anti-Semitism came when Boas participated in the United States Immigration Commission of 1907.[15] This Commission investigated the impact of immigration on American values and culture. Based on the work of scientific racist such as Daniel G. Brinton and A. H. Keane, the Commission produced a 'dictionary of races' to classify the people entering the United States.[16] It concluded that the immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe was dangerous and should be restricted. Opposing the general views of the Commission, Boas wrote a report rejecting the anti-Semitic theories of race. This report was later published as 'Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants' and became a landmark in Boas' career. In this piece, Boas emphatically rejected that the Jewish population had been racially isolated from other groups around the world. To prove his point, he compared the physical characteristics of Jewish immigrants and their offspring. Boas concluded that 'American-born descendants of immigrants differ in type from their foreign-born parents'.[17] He attributed such differences to the 'influence of American environment'. In particular, Boas claimed that the head measurements of Jewish children in America were very different from those of Jewish infants in Europe; in both cases, the heads

[14] Sydel Silverman, 'The Boasians and the Invention of Cultural Anthropology', p. 263.
[15] James Pula, 'American Immigration Policy and the Dillingham Commission" in Polish American Studies, Vol. 37 (1980), pp. 5–31.
[16] This 'dictionary' was prepared by Daniel Folkmar and Elnora Folkmar. William P. Dillingham, Dictionary of Races of Peoples (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911).
[17] See Franz Boas. 'Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants', in American Anthropologist, Vol. 14 (1912), p. 530.

of Jewish children were similar to the rest of the population in which they lived.[18] This argument is of particular importance for our purposes as it will be shown later that Ambedkar rejected the racial difference of untouchables along the same lines as Boas refuted the racial inferiority of the Jews.

Twenty years later, when the ideology of Aryanism was booming in Germany, Boas made his case against scientific racism even clearer. In an article entitled 'Aryans and Non-Aryans', Boas criticised the Nazi ideology that the Aryan race had 'certain biologically determined qualities which are entirely foreign to every "non-Aryan"'.[19] For Boas, the term Aryan only defined a linguistic background. It did not relate to racial difference. In this sense, and 'Aryan is anyone who speaks an Aryan language, Swede as well as American Negro or Hindu'.[20] The core of Boas' argument was that there were no pure races as history indicated that an extensive human migration existed since the glacial period. He highlighted the case of Spain in which there was an extensive mix of Iberians, Phoenicians, Celts, Romans, Moors and Jews. Similar conditions, Boas argued, were present across Europe. Thus, he concluded that it was a 'fiction to speak of a German race'.[21]

Boas also highlighted the absence of a connection between physical and mental characteristics. This was a direct challenge to the notion that Caucasians were mentally superior to people of African descent. Boas accepted that there were 'mental characters' among the various regions and peoples of the world but these were not related to race. On the contrary, Boas explained that mental characteristics depended on 'the unifying cultural bond which unites the people'.[22] The idea of culture brought an aspect of impermanence to the notion of

[18] Ibid., pp. 530-62. See also Clarence C. Gravlee, Russel H. Bernard and William R. Leonard. 'Heredity, Environment, and Cranial Form: A Reanalysis of Boas's Immigration Data', in American Anthropologist, Vol. 105, (2003), pp. 126–127.
[19] Franz Boas, 'Aryans and Non-Aryans', in The American Mercury, Vol. 6 (1934), p. 219.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 221.
[22] Ibid., 223.

identity. These cultural bonds could be learned and changed. Boas believed that language and customs played a vital part in the creation of these bonds. He held the view that a nation was not 'defined by its descent but by its language and customs'. Regardless of their descent, anyone could adapt, learn and feel another as their own culture. For Boas, this was a common phenomenon in Europe. He noted that 'just as Germanized Slavs and French have become German in their culture, as the Frenchified Germans have become French, the Russianized ones Russian; so have the German Jews become Germans'. Boas concluded that through Aryanism, the German government was trying to 'justify on scientific grounds their attitude toward the Jews; but the science upon which they are building their policies is a pseudo-science'.[23] In short, Boas denied the links between race and nation. He substituted race with culture as the key element in the formation of communities.

The concept of 'cultural bonds' highlighted by Boas is paramount. It will be shown later that, like Boas, Ambedkar too adopted a fluid conception of culture. With this he rejected that Untouchables were racially inferior to the rest of the Indian population. In contrast to Boas, Ambedkar did not consider 'languages and customs' to be vital in the formation of a 'mental character'. There were two specific reasons for these. First, Ambedkar was aware that Untouchables were not a homogenous group. They had different languages and customs depending on their location in India. Thus, these cultural bonds could not bring Untouchables together politically or socially. Second, a lot of the customs practiced by Untouchables had Hindu elements. This would be problematic for Ambedkar, particularly after the 1930s, when Gandhi would claim that Untouchables should be considered Hindus due to their religious practices. Rather than relying on language and customs, Ambedkar emphasised the mental and psychological aspects in the construction of identities such as race and caste. This he seemed

[23] Ibid.

to have picked up from John Dewey and Alexander Goldenweiser, Boas' student and Ambedkar's professor at Columbia.

The rejection of race as a determinant of social structure also played an important part in the work of Goldenweiser. Similar to Boas, Goldenweiser considered that human behaviour was primarily determined by cultural differences learnt through social interaction.[24] Goldenweiser explained how such beliefs in race, or in notions such as racism and anti-Semitism, were not determined by birth but socially acquired:

> Prejudice, racial prejudice, is a group phenomenon, a social phenomenon. It is based on traditional backgrounds and is inculcated unconsciously into us early in life, before we know what is happening. And we cannot get rid of it unless we become, to a great extent, individualists, independent thinkers, persons who can stand on their own feet intellectually and emotionally, who are detached and capable of viewing things "above the battle". [25]

In the same way, Goldenweiser's critique of race represents the line defended by him and Boas: 'It so happens that race is not merely a physical fact, is not merely a psychological fact—and in both these capacities we might as well disregard it on this occasion—but race today has once more, as so often before, become a state of mind. Race is a state of mind. It is an attitude. We are replete with it.'[26] This particular quote is quite important. As it will be shown later in the essay, in the 1930s Ambedkar, following Goldenweiser, defined caste as a state of mind.

If we assume that Ambedkar was exposed to such ideas during his course at Columbia, then to what extent did the Boas/Goldenweiser rejection of the fixity of race influence his arguments against the racial inferiority of Untouchables in India? At the turn of the twentieth century racial explanations of caste were widespread both in India and in Europe. Such theories were supported by the work of important intellectuals such as Max Weber and colonial ethnographers such as Herbert Risley.[27] The work of the latter was particularly influential in

[24] On Boas and race see Thomas Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); For Goldenweiser see his 'Race and Culture in the Modern World', in Journal of Social forces, Vol. 3 (1924), pp.127-136.
[25] Goldenweiser, 'Race and Culture', p. 134.
[26] My emphasis. Ibid., 127.
[27] See Herbert Risley, The People of India (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1908); See also Max Weber, The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism (Illinois: The Free Press,

India. Risley's main thesis was that castes originated from racial differences between Indo-Aryans and Dravidians. According to Risley, the Indo-Aryans 'subdued the inferior race, established themselves as conquerors, and captured women according to their needs'. After breeding enough females to serve their purposes, he argued, the Indo-Aryans 'closed their ranks to all further intermixture of blood'. For Risley, this marked the birth of the caste system. He was convinced that the 'principle upon which the system rests is the sense of distinctions of race indicated by differences of colour'.[28] Furthermore, Risley saw a connection between race and the structures of societies. Following the work of Topinard and Broca, Risley claimed that a broad nose was a marker of racial inferiority and backwardness. This was also true in terms of caste. Risley held that upper castes had a smaller nasal index than the lower castes:

> If we take a series of castes in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, or Madras, and arrange them in the order of the average nasal index, so that the caste with the finest nose shall be at the top, and that with the coarsest at the bottom of the list, it will be found that his order substantially corresponds with the accepted order of social precedence. Thus in Bihar or the United Provinces the casteless tribes, Kols, Korwas, Mundas and the like, who have not yet entered the Brahmanical system, occupy the lowest place in both series. Then come the vermin-eating Musahars, and the leather-dressing Chamars. The fisher castes, Bauri, Bind, and Kewat, are a trifle higher in the scale; the pastoral Goala, the cultivating Kurmi, and a group of cognate castes from whose hands a Brahman may take water follow in due order, and from them we pass to the trading Khatris, the landholding Babhans and the upper crust of Hindu society.[29]

In short, Risley attributed a lower caste status to an inferior racial background. Such beliefs posed a challenge to Ambedkar, who needed to show that Untouchables were not inherently inferior to the rest of Indian society. To do this, he needed to find an alternative to discard the racial theories of the time. In the following lines I examine how Ambedkar used his knowledge in anthropology to deny the racial inferiority of Untouchables. I argue that for Ambedkar, the practice of untouchability was learnt through social interaction rather than prescribed by race

1958). For a review of the way Risley used race in relation to caste see Susan Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in Colonial Ethnography of India' in Peter Robb (ed), The Concept of Race in South Asia (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 165-218.

[28] Risley, The People of India, p. 264.

[29] Ibid., 28

or a divine source. More importantly, he tried to show that caste and untouchability were dynamic and susceptible to change.

**Ambedkar, race and caste**

Ambedkar did not wait long to try the new anthropological ideas he learnt at Columbia. In 1916, he presented the paper 'Castes in India: Their mechanism, genesis and development' in Godenweiser's course. In this piece, Ambedkar attempted to explain the origin of caste. Not surprisingly, Ambedkar's essay reflected some of the main features of the Boasian school of thought. In particular, 'Castes in India' reads as a vehement rejection of racial theories to explain the caste system. From the beginning of the manuscript, Ambedkar downplayed the importance of race in India. He noted that the people of the subcontinent were 'a mixture of Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Scythians.'[30] This made racial differences irrelevant as 'ethnically all people are heterogeneous.'[31] Ambedkar was also very careful to underscore that the racial explanations of the caste system were flawed and based on foreign conceptions of society. Ambedkar argues that 'European students of Caste have unduly emphasised the role of colour in the Caste system. Themselves impregnated by colour prejudices, they very readily imagined it to be the chief factor in the Caste problem. But nothing can be farther from the truth'.[32] He continued to disqualify Herbert Risley, one of the biggest exponents of the racial theories of caste, as someone who 'makes no new point deserving of special attention'.[33] Furthermore, Ambedkar considered evolutionists and eugenic theories so absurd that, like Boas and Goldenweiser, he didn't even bother to discuss them in great detail:

[30] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' in Vasant Moon, ed., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vol., Bombay: Education Department, Gov. of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1916]), 1, p. 6.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ambedkar, 'Castes in India', p. 21.
[33] Ibid., p. 8 This point was also noted by Ishita Banerjee-Dube in 'Caste, Race and Difference: The Limits of Knowledge and Resistance', Current Sociology, Vol. 62(2014), pp.512-530.

> Without stopping to criticize those theories that that explain the caste system as a natural phenomenon occurring in obedience to the law of disintegration, as explained by Herbert Spencer in his formula of evolution, or as natural as 'the structural differentiation within an organism'—to employ the phraseology of orthodox apologist—, or as an early attempt to test the laws of eugenics—as all belonging to the same class of fallacy which regards the caste system as inevitable, or as being consciously imposed in anticipation of these laws on a humble population, I will now lay before you my own view on the subject.[34]

Instead, Ambedkar highlighted the importance of culture and psychology in the genesis and development of caste. With this, he showed that caste was not immutable and that it could change through time.

Ambedkar's thesis consisted of four main points. First, he explained that despite the diverse nature of the Hindu population, India had a deep cultural unity.[35] Second, he noted that caste was a parcelling of a larger cultural unit into bits. This was possible by making endogamy sacred to Hindu society. Endogamy, according to Ambedkar, was important as it was a way to prevent 'surplus women' and 'surplus men' from abandoning their homes and joining another group that could damage their original community. Thirdly, Ambedkar defended the idea that there was only one caste, that of the Brahmins. He explained that before the caste system was widespread, the population of the subcontinent was divided in classes.[36] Finally, Ambedkar's argued that the dissemination of caste in India could not be explained religiously by the creation of the Laws of Manu. In other words, the Laws of Manu reflected practices already in existence in Indian society rather than imposing new stipulations to be followed. Building on the ideas of the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde and Walter Bahegot,[37] Ambedkar argued that endogamy became a fashion in India first practiced by Brahmins. Endogamy was then imitated by other 'sub-divisions' of Indian society and eventually transformed into castes.[38] In his words:

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[34] Ibid., p. 17
[35] Ibid., p. 6.
[36] Ibid., p. 18. Ambedkar's vision of classes in India reflects the varna system. However, Ambedkar argues that such division were flexible and people were able change their 'classes according to their qualifications.
[37] Ambedkar used mainly Tarde's book Laws of imitation (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1903).
[38] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Castes in India', p. 18.

> Endogamy or the closed-door system, was a fashion in the Hindu society, and as it had originated from the Brahmin caste it was whole-heartedly imitated by all the non-Brahmin sub-divisions or classes, who in their turn, became endogamous castes. It is 'the infection of imitation' that caught all these sub-divisions on their onward march of differentiation and has turned them into castes. The propensity to imitate is a deep-seated one in the human mind and need not be deemed an inadequate explanation for the formation of the various castes in India.[39]

Thus, caste was neither racial, pre-social nor fixed in time. Caste for Ambedkar was derivative of the practice of endogamy. It involved environmental, cultural and psychological elements. It was specific to the culture of India and it was disseminated through imitation. This meant that caste could be unlearnt and transformed. Ambedkar's essay on caste was innovative enough to become his first recorded publication. In 1917, he published this piece in Indian Antiquary, the journal founded by the Scottish archaeologist James Burgess. Ambedkar's use of anthropological ideas went beyond academia. Ambedkar continued to use ideas inspired by Boas and Goldenweiser to reject the practice of untouchability in India, and to distinguish himself from other politicians that claimed to represent Untouchables.

Ambedkar returned to India in 1924.[40] With his remarkable educational credentials, Ambedkar soon gained notice from the Mahar community in Bombay and from the colonial government who saw him as a potential political leader to counter Congress' mass political movement. In fact, in 1927 Ambedkar was nominated by the colonial government (not elected) to serve as a representative of the Depressed Classes in the Bombay Legislative Council. Ambedkar remained in this post for ten years. During this time, he found an outlet to disseminate his new views on caste and untouchability.

Ambedkar's view on untouchability contrasted with mainstream explanations of the origin of untouchability in India. Former low-caste leaders like Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890) and M.C. Rajah (1883-1943), argued that untouchables were the original inhabitants of the sub-

[39] Ibid. The phrase 'the infection of imitation' comes from the work of Walter Bahegot, an English journalist, economist and political theorist. See his Physics and Politics: Or Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of Natural Selection and Inheritance to Political Society (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner and Co. LTD, 1891), p. 95.

[40] K.L. Chanchreek, Dalits in post-independence era (New Delhi: Shree Publishers & Distributors, 2010), pp. 175-178.

continent. According to this narrative, Untouchables were part of a different race that was in need of protection after experiencing centuries of oppression from Aryan-Hindu conquerors. Phule's work illustrates how racial theories about untouchability were alive and well even before Ambedkar's time. Phule's writings emphasised that the low-castes of India or '*Shudras* and *Atishudras'* were conquered and exploited by the foreign 'Aryan-Brahmin':

> The Aryan Brahmins established their own supremacy and domination over the original inhabitants here by conquering them in wars. The war-like Ksatriyas were *enslaved* and were given the pejorative name of 'kshudra' (insignificant)- which later was corrupted into 'Shudra'.[41]

There is little doubt that Ambedkar was aware of Phule's ideas. Even though Phule passed away a year before Ambedkar was born, both of these leaders came from Western India and shared the same benefactor, the Gaekwad of Baroda. Furthermore, Ambedkar dedicated his book Who were the Shudras? to the memory of Phule.[42] The connections between Ambedkar and Phule made the former's rejection of the racial explanation of untouchability even more surprising.

The idea that Untouchables did not belong to the Aryan race was also held by M.C. Rajah, a seasoned 'Paraiyar' politician who would clash with Ambedkar over the issue of separate electorates in the 1930s. Originally from Madras, Rajah's career was linked to the education of Untouchables. He became a teacher in 1906. He was also involved in several education committees in Madras and founded a Dravidian school at Nugambakkam in 1936.[43] Rajah was an active politician and a firm believer that Untouchables had a pre-Aryan origin. In The Oppressed Hindus, a pamphlet published in 1925, Rajah wrote that there was a racial

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[41] Quoted in Michael Bergunder, "Contested Pasts: Anti-Brahmanical and Hindu Nationalist Reconstructions of Indian prehistory", Historiographia Linguistica, Vol. 31, no. 1 (2004), 59-104, p. 63. See also Gail Omvedt, Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India (New Delhi: Sage, 1994) p. 98.

[42] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Who Were the Shudras? How They Came To Be the Fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society' in Vasant Moon (ed), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vols., Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1946]), 7, p. 66.

[43] R.K. Kshirsagar, Dalit Movement in India and its Leaders (New Delhi: MD Publications PVT LTD, 1994), pp. 302-304.

difference between the people he claimed to represent and their oppressors.[44] He explained that in Madras the Depressed Classes were *Adi-Dravidas*, the 'original inhabitants of the soil'.[45] According to Rajah, the *Adi-Dravidas* represented the earliest civilization of South India. They were a powerful community which 'developed a complete civilization of their own, with their democratic form of Government, their fine arts and a religion and philosophy of their own'.[46] Nonetheless, the splendour of the *Adi-Dravidas* came to an end with the arrival of the Aryans. The coming of the Aryans was not entirely unwelcomed. Rajah explained that the people known as *Dravidas* joined the ranks of the Aryans and were converted into Caste Hindus. Contrastingly, the *Adi-Dravidas* of South India resisted the Aryan invasion and were penalized because of this opposition. In *The Oppressed Hindus*, Rajah described how the Aryan invaders made servants of the *Adi-Dravidas*. The latter were debarred from religious matters and from carrying arms. Furthermore, the *Adi-Dravidas* 'were not only punished with social degradation, but were also stigmatized as untouchables and unapproachables'.[47] Thus, for Rajah the Untouchables or the *Adi-Dravidas* were a community that could be distinguished racially from the main body of the Hindu population.

At first glance, Phule and Rajah's theories about the origin of Untouchables do not seem that far from the ones propounded by Ambedkar in relation to Buddhism.[48] The three of them in broad terms, suggest that at some point a group of people were deemed Untouchables for resisting Brahmanism. However, there are important differences that need to be highlighted. Phule and Rajah argued that Untouchables were the original inhabitants of India, meaning that there was a racial difference between the Aryan-conquerors and the non-Aryan victims. At a

[44] M.C. Rajah, The Oppressed Hindus (New Delhi: Critical Quest, 2005).
[45] Ibid., p. 10.
[46] Ibid., p.11.
[47] Ibid., p.12.
[48] See in particular B.R. Ambedkar, 'The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables' in Vasant Moon (ed), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vols., Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1948]), 7, pp. 239-382

time when evolutionist theories were not entirely discarded and when colonial forces often used racial arguments to legitimise their power, like Risley's argument, Ambedkar's connection between untouchability and Buddhism becomes more interesting. Defending the idea that Untouchables were Buddhists allowed Ambedkar to centre the argument in a cultural field. In other words, Ambedkar discarded the idea that Untouchables were part of an inferior race conquered by Aryan invaders, as this would justify their position at the bottom of Indian society.

Ambedkar's rejection of racial theories about untouchability was consistent throughout his career. Both in politics and in his written work. For instance, in 1928 Ambedkar was called to make a submission to the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission). The commission was appointed to investigate the constitutional future of India. Ambedkar gave evidence on the subject of the Depressed Classes. On 29 May 1928, Ambedkar demanded adult franchise, joint electorates and reserved seats for Untouchables in India. Even though his demands were not acknowledged by the commission, Ambedkar made it clear that he did not share the racial explanation of untouchability that M.C. Rajah had defended a few days before him. For instance, when Ambedkar was asked by John Simon if Untouchables were the original inhabitants of India, he refused to reply:

> Ambedkar: [W]e cannot be deemed to be part of the Hindu community.
> Chairman (John Simon): You come, I believe from an earlier set of inhabitants of this continent?
> Ambedkar: That is one view, I think.
> Chairman: It is supposed—we will not go into details—that you are pre-Aryan?
> Ambedkar: Well, I do not know. That is a view.[49]

Ambedkar's participation in the Simon Commission is important for two reasons. First, this was the only time when Ambedkar argued for Untouchables to be part of the general electoral constituency. This shows that Ambedkar was committed to gain recognition for Untouchables

[49] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Dr. Ambedkar Before the Indian Statutory Commission on 23rd October 1928' in Vasant Moon (ed), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vol., Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1928]), 2, p. 465.

as a community with special needs for political representation. Yet, he was still not ready to make a break with the larger Hindu community. Second, the Simon Commission also marked the fall of M.C. Rajah as the most important representative of Untouchables in the eyes of the colonial government. After this, Ambedkar rose to the centre stage of Indian politics and began to take part in different committees created to assess the problem of untouchability in India.

During the Round Table Conferences that took place from 1930 to 1932, the question of Untouchables' political representation peaked. These conferences saw the clash of two conflicting visions regarding the past, present and future of Untouchables and untouchability as national problems. First, M.K. Gandhi condemned the practice of untouchability but maintained that the people classified as Untouchables were traditionally Hindus and should remain in this condition. The second view was submitted by Ambedkar. Here, Ambedkar adopts a different position than Boas regarding the importance of language and customs in the makeup of identity. Ambedkar claimed that despite common religious beliefs the shared history of discrimination and segregation suffered by Untouchables made them an element apart from the Hindu community. The recognition of this group as an independent political community was important for Ambedkar as it meant that they could claim separate electorates. This was key as Ambedkar saw politics as a great tool for the domination of the caste Hindus over the life of Untouchables. The British Government supported Ambedkar's views. In 1932, the Depressed Classes were granted special electoral protection in the form of the Communal Award. Gandhi did not accept this and fasted in protest. Ambedkar reached an agreement with Gandhi after intense negotiations resulting in the so-called Poona Pact. Untouchables were to remain politically classified as Hindus and not as a political minority. This was a disappointment for Ambedkar whose views about Hinduism became more radical after this incident.

In 1935, Ambedkar decided to abandon Hinduism and embrace another religion. Ambedkar addressed some of his followers in a conference at Yeola, Nashik District of Maharashtra. There, he uttered his now famous words: 'Unfortunately for me I was born a Hindu Untouchable. It was beyond my power to prevent that but I declare that it is within my power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating conditions. I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu'.[50] Gradually, Ambedkar turned to Buddhism as his religion of choice for Untouchables. From the mid-1930s till his death in 1956, Ambedkar developed a theory about how ancient Buddhists were punished by Hindus and became Untouchables. In these writings Ambedkar continued to reflect the influence of his years in America. For instance, In Annihilation of Caste (1936), considered today as one of his seminal works, Ambedkar rejected once again the singularity of a racial origin of Untouchables. In the same vein as Franz Boas, Ambedkar sustained that to treat caste differences as racial differences was 'a gross perversion of facts'.[51] In his words:

> What racial affinity is there between the Brahmin of the Punjab and the Brahmin of Madras? What racial affinity is there between the untouchable of Bengal and the untouchables of Madras? What racial difference is there between the Brahmin of the Punjab and the Chamar of the Punjab? What racial difference is there between the Brahmin of Madras and the Pariah of Madras? The Brahmin of the Punjab is racially of the same stock as the Chamar of the Punjab and the Brahmin of Madras is of the same race as the Pariah of Madras. Caste system does not demarcate racial division.[52]

Ambedkar also dealt with the question of the Aryan race in Who were the Shudras?, written in 1946. Following the work of W.Z. Ripley,[53] Ambedkar took race to mean 'a body of people possessing certain typical traits which are hereditary.'[54] While he was not able to reject

[50] Quoted in C.D. Naik, Buddhism and Dalits: Social Philosophy and Traditions (Delhi: Kalpaz, 2010), p.172. See also The Times of India, 16 October 1935.
[51] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Annihilation of Caste' in Vasant Moon (ed), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vol., Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1936]), 1, p. 48. Here Ambedkar quotes from the Indian archeologist D.R. Bhandarkar who claimed that 'There is hardly a class, or Caste in India which has not a foreign strain in it. There is an admixture of alien blood not only among the warrior classes—the Rajputs and the Marathas—but also among the Brahmins who are under the happy delusion that they are free from all foreign elements.'
[52] Ibid. Emphasis mine.
[53] William Z. Ripley, The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Turner & Co, 1900).
[54] Ambedkar, 'Who were the Shudras?', p. 66.

anthropometry altogether, as most academics of the time, Ambedkar was still critical of the supposed racial divisions of the people of India.[55] He still believed that the measurement of the human head was the only reliable trait to determine race, but argued that caste was not racial. Ambedkar noticed that 'if anthropometry is a science which can be depended upon to determine the race of a people, then the result obtained by the application of anthropometry…disprove that the Untouchables belong to a race different from the Aryans and the Dravidians. The measurements establish that the Brahmin and the Untouchables belong to the same race.'[56] That is, differences in human skulls were non-existent in India, and they certainly didn't support the division of people into castes.[57] As noted earlier in the essay, this argument was precisely the one used by Franz Boas against anti-Semitic theories of race where he showed that the physical characteristics of Jewish children in America were more similar to the rest of the children in that country than to Jewish children in Europe.[58]

**Untouchability as a cultural conflict**

Ambedkar's explanation of untouchability reflected the focus on culture and psychology defended in the works of Boas. He argued that the problem of untouchability was the result of social and cultural conflicts. In The Untouchables: Who were they and why they became Untouchables? (1948), Ambedkar gave a historical account on how untouchability arose in India.[59] Ambedkar's intention behind this piece was to show that untouchability was not

[55] George W. Stocking Jr. showed in a great way how during the early 1900s racial and cultural ideologies interacted for a long period of time and were often used together despite their often contradictory views. See his 'The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race', in Modernism/Modernity, Vol. 1(1994), pp.4-16.
[56] Ambedkar, 'Who were the Shudras?, p. 302.
[57] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Annihilation of Caste' pp. 48-49.
[58] Boas, 'Changes in Bodily Form', pp. 530-562.
[59] B.R. Ambedkar, 'The Untouchables', pp. 239-382. The book regarding the origin of the Shudras written by Ambedkar also points out to the impermanence of identity in Ambedkar's thought. The book was entitled: B.R. Ambedkar, 'Who were the Shudras? How they came to be the fourth varna in the Indo-Aryan society'.

hereditary, ancestral or fixed. Even the title, framed as a question, suggests that untouchability is not a permanent state and has an explanation. The title also proposes that identities can change over time as Untouchables were something else before being condemned to untouchability.

One of the main arguments of The Untouchables is that this group was once 'broken men', stray members of tribes that had been defeated by stronger groups.[60] After being routed, these broken men settled nearby the villages of settled tribes and agreed to do the work of watch men and wards in exchange for food and shelter. However, the settled tribes did not absorb these men as they were considered aliens. Ambedkar explained that 'the broken men lived in separate quarters outside the village for the reason they belonged to a different tribe and, therefore, to different blood.'[61] Despite the use of the term 'different blood', Ambedkar clarifies that he is referring to kinship rather than race. He went on to explain that the eventual categorisation of broken men into Untouchables was due to a cultural conflict, namely, that the settled communities were Hindu and followed a Brahminical religious system, while the broken men were Buddhists and 'did not revere the Brahmins, did not employ them as their priests and regarded them as impure.'[62] The broken men hated the Brahmins because the Brahmins were the enemies of Buddhism. Similarly, the Brahmins imposed untouchability upon the broken men for not leaving Buddhism and for eating beef.[63] Thus, according to Ambedkar one of the roots of untouchability laid in the hatred and contempt which the Brahminical order created against Buddhist and against those who continue to eat beef. This enmity was part of a struggle for power that was later transformed into canon law once Brahmanism became stronger than Buddhism in India. In other words, untouchability was the outcome of a cultural war.

> That the object of the Brahmins in giving up beef-eating was to snatch away from the Buddhist Bhikshus the supremacy they had acquired is evidenced by the adoption of vegetarianism by

[60] Ibid. p. 275.
[61] Ibid. p. 277.
[62] Ibid., p. 315.
[63] Ibid., p. 317.

> Brahmins. Why did the Brahmins become vegetarian? The answer is that without becoming vegetarian the Brahmins could not have recovered the ground they had lost to their rival namely Buddhism. In this connection it must be remembered that there was one aspect in which Brahmanism suffered in public esteem as compared to Buddhism. That was the practice of animal sacrifice which was the essence of Brahmanism and to which Buddhism was deadly opposed. That in an agricultural population there should be respect for Buddhism and revulsion against Brahmanism which involved slaughter of animals including cows and bullocks is only natural. What could the Brahmins do to recover the lost ground? To go one better than the Buddhist Bhikshus not only to give up meat-eating but to become vegetarians- which they did.[64]

After dealing with the cultural aspect of untouchability Ambedkar turned to the psychological aspect of it. It is here where Ambedkar clearly breaks intellectually with Boas. Following Dewey, and to a lesser extent Goldenweiser, Ambedkar believed that psychology was closely linked to experience. These were key in the formation of individuals and communities. Ambedkar was convinced that through meaningful experiences, individuals were able to question their conditions and change them. From such a stand, Ambedkar's emphasis on education and religious conversion to eliminate untouchability acquires a new meaning. In contrast, from an anthropological perspective, Boas was not interested in the psychology of individuals as such. Rather, he 'wanted to determine the psychological laws which control the mind of man everywhere, and that may differ in various racial and social groups'.[65]

These tensions are understandable if we consider that Boas' main objective throughout his career was to understand different cultures, not necessarily to change them. His arguments remained largely in academia. Ambedkar, on the other hand, wanted to change the culture, the environment and the politics he lived in. For this to happen, the psychology of Untouchables needed to change. It is very important to underscore that Ambedkar was not the only intellectual of his time to find Boas' views on psychology unfulfilling. As noted by Torres-Colon and Hobbs, Boas' other students such as Ruth Benedict, Alexander Lesser and Gene Weltfish differed with their mentor in this matter. More importantly, like Ambedkar, the three of them found in John Dewey a way to address the shortcomings in Boas' thought. Lesser in particular

[64] Ibid., p. 346.
[65] Franz Boas, 'Pyschological Problems in Anthropology' in The American Journal of Psychology, Vol. 21 (1909), p. 371.

used Dewey to emphasise the role of individual and social experience in the development of anthropology as a way to change intellectual currents and produce social change.[66] This sort of vision was also very clear in Ambedkar's understanding of the psychological aspect of untouchability and its connection to social change.

Since Ambedkar wrote Annihilation of Caste, he had argued that caste and untouchability were just than mere social practices. Ambedkar found that caste had also a psychological effect on people. It altered the way individuals behave among others and how individuals or groups think of themselves. In the same way as Goldenweiser did years before him, Ambedkar explained that caste was not a 'physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from co-mingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion, it is a state of the mind.'[67] In the same vein, in The Untouchables (1948), Ambedkar described untouchability as an 'aspect of social psychology…a sort of social nausea of one group against another group'.[68] Despite being a state of mind, the impact of caste and untouchability was transformed into psychological violence in the form of notions of purity and impurity and the division of society into high and low status. The beliefs in such a division of society had disabled the direct action of individuals against an oppressive system as such notions became part of the subconscious of Indian society. Referring to the unconscious feeling of subjection in the life of Untouchables Ambedkar commented:

> But if a man is deprived of his liberty indirectly he has no consciousness of his enslavement. Untouchability is an indirect form of slavery. To tell an Untouchable 'you are free, you are a citizen, you have all the rights of a citizen', and to tighten the rope in such a way as to leave him no opportunity to realize the ideal is a cruel deception. It is enslavement without making the Untouchables conscious of their enslavement. It is slavery though it is untouchability. It is real though it is indirect. It is enduring because it its unconscious.[69]

[66] Torres-Colon and Hobbs, 'The Intertwining of Culture', pp. 139-162.
[67] Ambedkar, 'Annihilation of Caste', p. 68.
[68] Ambedkar, 'The Untouchables', p. 370.
[69] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Untouchables or the children of India's Ghetto' in Vasant Moon (ed), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vols., Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1989]), 5, p. 15.

The psychological aspect of untouchability, Ambedkar argued, led Untouchables and the lower-caste Hindus to believe that they were condemned to be ploughmen and that they were never to convert their ploughshare into swords. On account of caste differences, they could not receive education. In Ambedkar's words: 'They (that is low-caste Hindus) could not think out or know the way to their salvation. They were condemned to be lowly and not knowing the way to escape and not having the means of escape, they became reconciled to eternal servitude, which they accepted as their inescapable fate.'[70]

Ambedkar's purpose in presenting untouchability as a psychological phenomenon was to make Untouchables aware that their social condition was not fixed or inescapable. Rather, he showed that untouchability was constantly being sustained through cultural and psychological violence. In order to be eradicated, the violence inherent in untouchability had to be exposed: 'No resistance to power is possible while the sanctioning lies, which justify that power, are accepted as valid. While the lie which is the first and the chief line of defense remains unbroken there can be no revolt. Before any injustice, any abuse or oppression can be resisted, the lie upon which it is founded must be unmasked, must be clearly recognized for what it is."[71] With such exposure, Ambedkar aimed to show Untouchables a path to abandon untouchability and attain social and cultural liberation.

**Conclusion**

From 1950 onwards, Ambedkar committed to his idea of abandoning Hinduism in favour of Buddhism. His interest in converting to Buddhism was clear when he was invited to attend the World Buddhist Conference held at Colombo on 25 May 1950. In 1954, Ambedkar announced

[70] Ambedkar, 'Annihilation of Caste', p. 63.
[71] Emphasis mine. See B.R. Ambedkar, 'A warning to the Untouchables' in Vasant Moon (ed), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (21 vols., Bombay: Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra, 1979-2006 [1989]), 5, p. 399.

that he was completing a book on Buddhism. Two years later he finished the manuscript of The Buddha and his Dhamma, but it was published only after his death.[72] On 14 October 1956 in the city of Nagpur, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism in a ceremony held by the eldest monk in India, the Burmese Bhikku Mahasthaveer Chandramani. Ambedkar was joined by hundreds of thousands of his followers. Yet, after only three months, Ambedkar breathed his last on 6 December 1956 at his residence in New Delhi. His body was sent to Bombay and was put on a funeral pyre at Dadar crematorium in Bombay.[73]

Ambedkar's decision to embrace Buddhism has often been seen as a product of his disillusionment with politics.[74] Nonetheless, after considering the connections between the ideas of Boas and Ambedkar, one may suggest that conversion was a sort of cultural and psychological rebellion against Brahmanism. It was a way to show his followers that changing their status in society was possible as there wasn't any racial or inherent difference to prevent it.

This essay argues for the importance of examining Ambedkar's career in relation to the anthropological ideas of his time. It shows Ambedkar not only as an informed scholar of fashionable theories of the West, but also as a refined analyst, innovator and practitioner of the things he believed in. As noted above, Ambedkar did not follow blindly the work of Boas. Rather, he transformed it to suit his political and ideological battles against untouchability. In doing so, Ambedkar made similar arguments to prominent Western academics such as Ruth Benedict and Alexander Lesser. It is important to note that Ambedkar's connections with anthropology do not end there. Just to mention a few examples, in his seminal work, The Interpretation of Cultures, Clifford Geertz draws several times from Ambedkar's concept of

[72] Eleanor Zelliot, Ambedkar and the Untouchable Movement, p.180.
[73] Ibid.
[74] For more on Ambedkar's conversion see Christophe Jaffrelot, Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analyzing and Fighting Caste, pp. 121-123; See also Gauri Viswanathan, Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 224.

nationalism as a 'feeling of a corporate sentiment of oneness'.[75] In the same way, in his Homo Hierarchicus Louis Dumont, without acknowledging Ambedkar, defines caste as a state of mind.[76] While these themes will have to be developed further in the future, this essay is intended to open new paths in the debates surrounding the field of global intellectual history.

[75] Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), pp. 256-292.
[76] Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 34.