

Challenging Enlightenment Paradigms: Responses of Benjamin and Tagore

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Abstract

European Enlightenment in the eighteenth century marked a paradigm shift in its perception of time and in the practice of historiography. The idea of linear/teleological classification of time and the notion of empirical documentation of history was combined with the notion of progress, which saw civilization as a development from the state of barbarity to that of refinement. The appropriation of this progressivist ideology by the powerful in society has served as a tool of domination. Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) and Rabindranath Tagore's "Crisis in Civilization"(1941), written in the wake of World War II, provide us with two radical perspectives which challenge such progressivist assumptions. Expanding the critical span into their other writings, this paper seeks to historicize the two figures in their varied positions of marginality as two counter-Enlightenment ideologues, writing at a moment of human history when the idea of being civilized was continually threatened by manifestations of barbarity in the socio-political/cultural dynamics of the entire world.

[Keywords: Benjamin, Tagore, Enlightenment, progress, historicism, historical materialism, technological modernity.]

"For every second of time was the straight gate through which the Messiah might enter."

"Theses on the Philosophy of History", Walter Benjamin.¹

"Today I live in the hope that the Saviour is coming- that he will be born in our midst in this poverty-shamed hovel which is India. I shall wait to hear the divine message of civilization which he will bring with him, the supreme word of promise that he will speak unto man from this very eastern horizon to give faith and strength to all who hear."

"Crisis in Civilization", Rabindranath Tagore.²

The texts from which the above quotes are taken are the unique expressions of the civilizational angst that was experienced by the two thinkers in two different socio-cultural and political realities. Although the volatile topos of Nazi Germany and that of colonial India were different in terms of politics, these two essays share a chronological affinity with each other. Walter Benjamin completed his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in Spring, 1940 and Tagore wrote "Crisis in Civilization" on the occasion of his eightieth birthday in 1941 (The texts will be further referred to as "Theses" and "Crisis" respectively.) Incidentally, the two texts were written by the authors just before their death. So, in the wake of the World War II, these two texts can be considered as potent critiques of the catastrophic moment of human history: a time which marked

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the fall of France, the threat to England, the still intact Hitler-Stalin pact whose most feared consequence at that moment was the close co-operation of the two most powerful secret police forces in Europe.³

My aim in this paper would be not to forcibly draw the apparent similarity of ideas expounded in the two text and the subsequent ideologies foregrounded by the two thinkers. Rather, I shall try to historicize these responses and the multidimensionally varied positions of the two authors. Interestingly, both responses are born out of their contemporary situation of despair but they eventually broaden up their span of critique to address some of the key paradigms of the European Enlightenment. I shall also try to expand my exploration into their other writings, where the critique of the Enlightenment meta-narratives of historical progress, time, and culture have found an expression, although historically and culturally they were unique. Since the converging point of their critique, to be explored in my paper, is Enlightenment, a brief sketch of the fundamental notions of progress prevalent in this period would be useful.

One of the most apt definitions of progress is that of historian J. B. Bury:

This idea means that the civilization has moved, is moving and will move in a desirable direction.⁴

In the eighteenth century, the intellectual context of proliferation of the idea of progress can be traced back to the Greco-Roman notion of a repeating cycle of golden, silver, bronze, and leaden ages; to the tripartite division of Western history into ancient, medieval and modern eras in the sixteenth century; to the gradual upholding of the power of human reason and the significance of observation propounded by figures like Bacon and Descartes and to the rapid growth of commercial activity and urban life. In the eighteenth century, scientific exploration reached its heights in the works of Newton. Fontenelle, Wotton and their eighteenth century followers contended in certain fields, above all in mathematics, the natural sciences and philosophy –where knowledge was cumulative; this view was also fostered by Denis Diderot and Alembert in their works. Simultaneously, apart from the secular strand, Christian theology itself disseminated the idea of the betterment of religion, and thereby indicating the possibility of redemption in near future. Turgot, Adam Smith and others understood the history of human civilization as the advance from barbarism towards refinement, epitomized by the contemporary Europe. Thinkers like Kant, Condorcet believed in the notion of the limitless perfectibility of human race, which they viewed as the harbinger of peace in the world. While Benjamin Rush emphasized education as the key to effective improvement, Bentham's utilitarian programme to legislate for the greatest happiness of the greatest number rested heavily on similar considerations. In the writings of Voltaire, Montesquieu and Gibbon we find a historiographic practice that borders on the imaginative reconstruction of the exotic life. This way of seeing put forward the idea of civilization as a whole, as something, that is containable as a chronotope. The idea of time also went through a massive transformation. The perpetual fixity of

human species was challenged by a proto-evolutionary, transformist point of view, which questioned the Christian views about the past. The concept of century came into being and the division/fragmentation of the uniformity of time was fostered by the invention of mechanical clocks during this period. The West as a civilization was gradually moving away from the concept of “being” to that of “becoming”. It is interesting to note that within the premise of eighteenth century counter-Enlightenment positions like that of Rousseau generated, which held the idea of a progressive civilization responsible for corrupting the human morals and instincts, for subjecting people to artificial needs, thereby captivating the human virtue within social boundaries. Romantics like Blake and Wordsworth also tried to come out of these notions of the Enlightenment grand-narratives in their poetry. The decline from and the deformity of the ideal/innocent state of human mind, caused by the urban/industrialized culture of England was one of the points of Blake’s critique. It is for this reason Wordsworth sought to explore his poetic sensibility outside city in the realm of nature and extend his self into it. He had faith in the restorative capability of nature, which, to him was capable of creating a whole out of the fragmented. It is within this large discourse of counter-Enlightenment ideology, that we have to contextualize the responses of Benjamin and Tagore.

Both in “Theses” and “Crisis” what attracts our attention is the acute pessimism that pervades at the level of assumption of these two texts. The ennui experienced by the two authors comes out from their marginal positions within their society. Born in a well-to-do, middle class, Jewish family in 1892, Benjamin is considered to be an important contributor to the aesthetics of Western Marxism, and is occasionally associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory. As a friend and collaborator, his connection with playwright Bertolt Brecht held importance in the formation of Brecht’s theory of the “epic theatre”. His works on Baudelaire, German tragic drama, and the nineteenth century Paris reveal an aesthetics possessing a combination of historical materialism, German idealism and Jewish mysticism. “In Germany I feel quite isolated in my efforts and interests among those of my generation...” held Benjamin.⁵ The middleclass Jewish ambience to which he belonged was paradoxically marked by the orthodox attitude towards religion and a yearning for assimilation into the nation-state of Germany. One of his contemporaries, Moritz Goldstein held:

We Jews administer the intellectual property of a people which denies us the right and the ability to do so... It is easy to show the absurdities of our adversaries’ arguments and prove that their enmity is unfounded. What would be gained by this? That their hatred is *genuine*... antipathy will remain as something irrefutable.⁶

Even the language of his writing was not Benjamin’s own. According to Kafka, their generation lived among “three impossibilities.” “The impossibility of not writing”: since it is only through this medium that they could externalize their angst; “the impossibility of writing in German”: as they could not relate their

identity to a language that was alien to them altogether; “the impossibility of writing differently”: for no other language was available.⁷ There were two way outs available to Benjamin to get away from this condition of contemplative stasis. He was attracted to the negative critical stance of both Zionism and Communism against the contemporary social condition. By 1937 the failure of his efforts to contribute as a writer in the anti-Fascist struggle annoyed him. This detachment from active revolutionary literature was a personally realized anti-Fascist stance that ran counter to the restorative policies for literature promoted worldwide by the Soviet Union. The only journal where he could place his writings without any ideological hesitation was that of the Institute of Social Research in New York. The detachment of this journal from day-to-day politics and its position in the arena of erudite academics put a kind of formalistic / political constraint to the writings of Benjamin. Apart from these was the fear of torture. Benjamin had to spend the major part of his life in exile and internment and ultimately committed suicide, in 1940, unable to bear the enormous pressure of Fascist torture that he thought would be unleashed on him if he was caught. Benjamin was optimistic about making the European Jewry critically aware of their status. He did not share the view that “the only salvation is in a Jewish state.”⁸ Repudiating this zeal for Jewish nationalism he viewed:

For me Jewishness is not in any sense an end in itself, but the noble bearer and representative of intellect.⁹

The only alternative to this politically debased brand of Zionism was Communism, since only this ideology could combat the nationalism that directly threatened culture. These multifarious marginalizations: cultural, political, social; Benjamin’s oscillation between Marxism and Judaism provides us with the required entry points to “Theses” and the pessimism adhered to the text.

Tagore, as a writer, on the other hand, belonged to the colonial period. As a thinker he was a non-conformist to the prevalent *weltanschauung* of his contemporary society. The flexibility of his perception had within it an inclusive attitude towards the dissemination of values of the European Enlightenment which he saw as the benevolent gesture on the part of the colonial masters. “Crisis” was written at a point of time in history when the nationalist sentiment was creating an upsurge in India’s political scenario. Earlier, in 1911, the annulment of the Partition developed in his mind a positive attitude of the West towards the natives. For Tagore it was an acknowledgement of the legitimate aspirations of the colonized. In 1913, the conferment of Noble prize to him strengthened this outlook. In the era of high nationalism, Tagore was a cosmopolitan. He stressed on the free interaction between the cultures of the East and the West in an apolitical platform, and regarded India as the “syncretic space” of this dialogic interaction. His perception could deconstruct the stereotype of a racist westerner to see the notion of philanthropy inherent in the Western religious and cultural ethos.¹⁰ World War I and the Jallianwallabagh massacre demystified this optimistic outlook towards the West and Tagore

gradually became aware of the concealed threat behind the idealist/hypocritical veil of various nationalisms. This disillusionment about the imperial race coincided with his detachment from the anti-colonial nationalist movement in India. In his own land he was criticized harshly for this and was periodically accused of being a pro-British elitist. So, neither in the “home”, nor in the “world” he found a mass of audience that would be perceptible to his ideas of cultural osmosis. While Benjamin led the life of a literal exile, Tagore’s was an existence of intellectual captivation. This angst of going-unheard of is vocalized in “Crisis”:

I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. But today when I am about to quit the world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether.¹¹

According to Benjamin, Marxism as a politico-historical theory marks for the first time a departure from the conventionally accepted assumptions of historical progress. The notion of progress, be it through moral improvement, natural selection or technological modernity, is ultimately contained/fetishized by the capitalist money economy. John Bowen in this regard holds:

Within socialist thought, a commitment to progress marks a caesura between evolutionary and revolutionary versions of political change. If one believes that things will, of themselves, improve, then the need for revolutionary struggle is diminished. A faith in progress leads to a complacent understanding of Fascism and Capitalism alike.¹²

Against this “historicist” assumption of the traditional historiography (to which Benjamin feels revolutionary Socialism has also fall prey), Benjamin proposes a “historical materialist” alternative, and goes on to chalk out the task of a historian from this premise for a politically valid understanding of history. One generally views historical materialism as a dialectical movement ordered by a purpose – an ideology that is rationally intelligible. But for Benjamin, history is radically fragmented. Both Socialists and the dominant class are remarkably mute about the concept of time which resides outside history. They try to codify it as something which is idealist, utopian, mystical and therefore, susceptible to non-recognition. For Benjamin, it is within this idea of time that resides beyond any ideological/chronological classification, that we can get its essence in a crisis-proof form. The capitalist strategy of the commodifying interpretation of time evacuates human labour of its significance through the routinization, standardization and repetition, turning human beings into automatons. Drawing inspiration from *Angelus Novus*, a water-colour by Paul Klee, and incorporating in it the concept of the angel in Jewish mysticism, Benjamin imaginatively constructs the figure of the angel of history. With his widespread wings caught in the storm of progress, and his face turned towards the past he is constantly pushed by the storm into the future. The thwarted yearning of the angel to secure and re-establish a redemptive relation between the fragments of the past is qualified by a desperate desire to destroy the corrupt present to recreate it anew. This inability of the angel of history, is to Gershom Scholem the rationale behind

Benjamin's hope of a leap into the transcendental vision of the messianic: "frequently nothing remains of historical materialism except the term itself."¹³ Benjamin seeks to blast out this continuum of history and to preserve the fragments of it for men. Habermas views:

It is not from a historical stand point of accumulated cultural goods that Benjamin views the documents of culture, which are at the same time those of barbarism, but rather from a critical standpoint of the disintegration of culture "into goods which" as Benjamin adamantly expresses it, can become objects of possession for mankind.¹⁴

This can only be possible through a radical juncture from the discursively available past. Revolution is, therefore, viewed as an apocalyptic cessation of time. To elaborate this point, Benjamin refers to the French revolutionaries who shot at the church clocks of Paris to show their anxiety of detaching themselves from the influence of the past and there by, indicating a grasp over the future.¹⁵ While historians serves us with the data to make the past familiar to us, Benjamin tried to "defamiliarize" the present, and did not acknowledge it to be a natural/apolitical outcome of the monolithic/uniform past. We can see the evolution of his belief in the revolutionary potential inherent in technological modernity from his "Work of art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" to "Theses", where it culminates into severe disillusionment. To counter this captivation of "homogeneous empty time" Benjamin introduces the *Jetztzeit* – "the time filled with the presence of the now"¹⁶ The arrival of the Messiah, then indicates simultaneously an apocalyptic and restorative perception of time, where time has to be captured in its stillness, in its atomic form like that of a "monad".¹⁷ This complex concept derived from Jewish mysticism indicates the possibility within any moment to cut across the link with its past in a revolutionary manner. The past is therefore not there, available to us always, allwhere, and allwhen:

For every image of the past that is not recognized as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably... To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.¹⁸

This is what Benjamin views as a method of reading history "against the grain", which "constantly calls into question every victory, past, and present, of the rulers."¹⁹ And this is what the Social Democrats of his generation has not done according to Benjamin. Succumbing to the progressivist ideology, the social democracy, in its anxiety to liberate the grand children, risks alienating men from the suffering of their downtrodden ancestors, who can not be liberated, but at best, simply remembered. Strongly influenced by surrealism, it was the attempt to capture the portrait of history "in the most insignificant representations of reality, its scraps as it were."²⁰

Enlightenment rationality was not conceived by Tagore only through its material dimension. Rather, rationality according to Tagore was a reservoir of the

universal, the spiritual. In “Crisis”, written in the aftermath of Noakhali Riots, we see Tagore’s vision of this liberating aspect of the Western Enlightenment, brought forth in the Indian soil by the British and received by the figures of Bengal Renaissance, as an antidote to the orthodoxy of Indian culture getting shattered. His yearning for a culture that would combine the material/scientific progress of the West with the Eastern moral fortitude and the ethic of love and liberty, he sees, in the last phase of his life as divested of any positive outcome. When Tagore goes on to unravel the hypocritical facade of the civilizing mission of the imperialists:

Then came the parting of the ways accompanied with a painful feeling of disillusion when I began increasingly to discover how easily those who accepted the highest truths of civilization disowned them with impunity whenever questions of national self interest were involved.²¹

One is at once reminded of Benjamin’s aphoristic dictum of the co-existence of culture and barbarism in any historical document. Critiquing the British education system Tagore observes that, technological superiority, which was one of the main tools of European domination in India, has been kept “a sealed book” to Indian population.²² The colonialist education adhered to its policy of creating “middle man” and through violence have torn apart the social fabric of India exploiting the land economically. British historiography according to Tagore views India’s history as a continual succession of contest between various religious sects, which provided the British with the ideological tool of separating the nation in terms of religious faith of Hindu and Muslim. We have to look at some other essays by Tagore to have a clear picture of Tagore as a historiographer and his counter-Enlightenment stance.

In his “A Vision of India’s History” Tagore opts for a mythico-symbolic reinterpretation of India’s history and tries to locate the essence of history in the epics and *Puranas* of India. Tagore holds that the Western critics

are ready to judge us with a sneering sense of superiority when comparing India’s history with their own. They never take into consideration the enormous burden of difficulty which Indian civilization has taken upon itself from its commencement.²³

Tagore, thereby, indicates the cultural compatibility that India as a civilization has been preaching since its inception, opposing it to the antithetical notion of Western nationalism: an ideology which has derived its theoretical and material consolidation from eighteenth century. From the many instances of Tagore’s symbolic/poetic reconstruction of India’s history one deserves mention. He views that in ancient India a dichotomy arose between the Brahmin cult of Ritualism (represented in the myth of Bhrigu) and the religion of love (embodied in the figure of Krishna, a Kshatriya.) Tagore holds

The mark of Brahmin Bhrigu’s kick, which Vishnu carries on his breast, is a myth-relic of the original conflict.²⁴

According to some critics, this rejection of history altogether for the preference of ahistorical constructions of myth is truly an indigenous understanding of the past, since it not only subverts the “master-narratives authorized by imperialism”, but also has an authenticity because it is located in the domain of pre-colonial and pre-modern societies.²⁵ Tagore, in this regard aptly held :

though the Mahabharata may not be history in the modern western definition of the term, it is, nevertheless, a receptacle of the historical records which had left their impress upon the living memory of the people for ages. Had any competent person attempted to sift and sort and analyse this material into an ordered array of facts, we should have lost the changing picture of Aryan society which they present, a picture in which the lines are vivid and dim, connected or confusedly conflicting, according to the lapse of memory, changes of ideal, variations of light and shade incident to time’s perspective. Self recording annals of history, as they are imprinted on the living tablet of ages, are bared before our sight in this great work.²⁶

In another essay Tagore observed that the so called lack of ingredients to reconstruct India’s history indicated the civilizational difference between the Indian society and the European nation-state. Whereas, the nation-state, since inception, necessitates the empirical recording of its formation, India has maintained a relation between the past and the future through the tenuous thread of the scriptures, *Puranas*, ancient poetry, social rituals and above all religion. Therefore, one cannot take the European historiography as his theoretical premise to etch India’s past.²⁷

But the radicality of Tagore’s perception of history seems to be overwhelming, when he questions any plausibly conceivable linearity embedded even within mythical narratives:

What if it be possible that Janaka, Visvamisra and Rama may not have been contemporaries as a matter of historical fact? That does not take away from their nearness to one another in the plane of idea.²⁸

According to Louise Blackeney Williams, Tagore conceives of a “sinusoidal” theory of history as opposed to the nationalist/teleological theory of the “cycloid”. In the later view, some cultures traverse a simple, repetitive cycle of rise into greatness followed by decline and decay and taking lessons from earlier periods ultimately ends up in progress. This leads to the nationalist essentialization of culture, where the partial classification/essentialization of cultures frustrates any kind of cultural osmosis. In “Crisis”, Tagore holds:

The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly of a particular race or country; its scope may not be limited, nor may it be regarded as the miser’s hoard buried underground.²⁹

Sinusoidal theories are more complex than that, since they consist of an endless series of cycles for all cultures. They view that the rise and fall of civilizations are the results of “continual alteration of two opposed traditions”, whose values are

either superior or inferior. Fundamental values of these cultures remain constant through all ages, but interchangeably differ in degree from each other: Since no permanence of either superiority or inferiority can be attributed to cultures, progress is not possible.³⁰ Tagore seems to echo this theory when he observes:

perfect balance in these opposing forces would lead to deadlock in creation. Life moves in cadence of constant adjustment of opposites; it is a perpetual process of reconciliation of contradictions.³¹

The overlapping concept of time, where there is no rupture between the past and the present, is a key concept in Tagore's philosophy. Tagore qualified this perception with the idea of a spiritual/essential permanence, that was always immanent in the concept of time. In the analysis of Tagore's play *Post Office* by Sankho Ghosh, we see that the dimensional difference between space and time is blurred, when Amal sees the king's postman coming to him perpetually since many earlier days.

This remote vision of Amal seeing it since many days, as it were, embraces the eternally flowing; in every moment of the present the two wings of past and the future get attached.³²

Despite these theoretical consolidations providing the impetus to conceive of Tagore as polemicizing against Enlightenment, it would be unjust to Tagore the thinker, if we ignore his ambiguous stance vis-à-vis Enlightenment. I have argued earlier, that reason/rationality for Tagore held a universal dimension. Tagore had faith in reason as a means of ethical and moral renovation of the collective consciousness of a society. This belief is similar to the Enlightenment notion of the reformative aspect of human reason:

In our family this change of the spirit was welcomed for the sake of its sheer rational and moral force.³³

Initially, Tagore was attracted to technological modernity also, which, he thought, could fruitfully render self-sufficiency to Indian people. We can see how he practically employed science in his works for rural reconstruction. But the extreme idolatry/idealization of rationality and technology put forward by Europe, was for Tagore, antithetically menacing for human salvation. In one of his essays, Tagore wondered whether science can be at all "humanized" and left it entirely upon science

to bring back sanity to the human world by lessening the opportunity to gamble with our fortune.³⁴

Does this yearning to take recourse in the purging capability of science in any way indicate a latent strain of the notion of progress, even within his apparently anti-progressivist stance? We are in two minds when in "Crisis" we hear from Tagore:

I have seen with my own eyes the admirable use to which Japan has put in her own country the fruits of this progress.³⁵

Tagore invokes the “Great One”, the “Saviour” to redeem the present of abysmal futility, manifest in the social fabric of India. This idea of an Asian messiah turns out to be a composite construct, where Tagore tried to combine the precepts of real-life pioneers like Rammohan and Gandhi with the mythological figure of Buddha and his philosophy of the all-embracing love and non-violence: *Maitreyi*. This vivid reimagining of the redeemer from the stand point of the colonized holds importance, since Tagore through this conception was writing against the grand narratives of the “western redeemer”, and the Eurocentric assumptions of it.

Both Tagore and Benjamin invested their individual religiosity with political signification, but the nature and degree of their radicalism seems to vary considerably. The rejection of the nationalist assumptions by the two authors, indicate a certain degree of similarity between them, since they always held an uncompromising attitude towards any kind of essentialization. Benjamin’s initial fascination with technological modernity as a means of revolutionizing the medium of art can be analyzed parallelly with reference to Tagore’s conception of technological innovations as a means of developing the society both materially and spiritually. Both were subsequently disillusioned and were forced to critically interrogate the discourses of technology and progress. Thus where Benjamin seeks to explode the quotidian of history and tries to get hold of the fleeting moments of the past, Tagore continually relocates history in the realm of the ahistorical. Benjamin, profoundly influenced by surrealism, eludes containment by his choice of the aphoristic subversion of the narrative teleology, where the language itself is “thought poetically”³⁶ Tagore, on the other hand, poetically reinterprets the myths to draw out of them the repressed totemic significations. Benjamin’s Messiah tries to reconstruct the existing world by first destroying it altogether, and by reinstating a redemptive possibility among the fragments of the past. For Benjamin, time is the rapid capture of a moment in its entirety from the flow of eternity. Tagore’s “Saviour” comes from the future to redeem the present. Tagore’s perception of time is always located in the domain of the eternal, the spiritual, where the distinctions between past, present and future do not hold any significance. Thus both of them, in their own manner, were trying to subvert, pluralize, and relativize the notion of time prevalent during the Enlightenment and appropriated by the dominant ones of society afterwards to suit their own purposes. The two authors painstakingly try in their own ways to fill up the hollow space created by Enlightenment where the emancipating potential of religion goes unrecognized. They do so through a language that relieves experience out of the repressed memory of the pre-rational. This establishes the deep bonding between revolutionary/radical prose and the language of poetry. Actually the premises of their critique are ontologically same. But the methods that they opt for to address them differ from one another.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, "These on the Philosophy of History", in Hanna Arendt, ed. *Illuminations* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 255. The text will be further referred to as "Theses".
2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Crisis in Civilization* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1941), p. 23. The text will further referred to as "Crisis".
3. Hanna Arendt, "Introduction", in Arendt, p. 7.
4. J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth* (USA: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), p. 5.
5. As quoted in Arendt, p. 27.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
8. As quoted in Anson Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism", in *New German Critique*, No. 34 (Winter, 1985), p. 94.
9. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 97. Benjamin was to subsequently revise his position.
10. Rabindranath Tagore, "Chhoto o Boro", in *Rabindra Rachanabali*, vol.13 (Kolkata: Government of West Bengal, 1990), pp. 606-609.
11. Tagore, *Crisis*, p.22.
12. John Bowen, "The Politics of Redemption: Eliot and Benjamin", in Tony Davis and Nigel Wood eds. *The Waste Land* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2003), p. 38.
13. Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken, 1976), p. 231.
14. Jurgen Habermas, "Consciousness-Rising or Redemptive Criticism – The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin", in *New German Critique* (Spring, 1979), p. 32.
15. Benjamin, "Theses", p. 253.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
20. Arendt, p.17.
21. Tagore, *Crisis*, p. 14.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
23. Rabindranath Tagore, "A Vision of India's History", in Sisir Kumar Das, ed. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996), p. 456.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 442.
25. Gyan Prakash, "Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography", in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), p. 15.
26. Tagore, "A Vision of India's History", p. 453.
27. Rabindranath Tagore, "Dhammapadam", in *Rabindranath Buddhadeb o Buddha Sanskriti* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 2008), p. 33.
28. Tagore, "A Vision of India's History", p. 439.
29. Tagore, *Crisis*, p. 13.

30. Louise Blakeney Williams, "Overcoming the 'Contagion of Mimicry': The Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Modernist History of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats", in *American Historical Review* (February, 2007), pp. 90-91.
31. Tagore, "A Vision of India's History", p. 444.
32. Sankho Ghosh, *Kaler Matra o Rabindra Natak* (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1985), p. 170. Translations mine.
33. Tagore, *Crisis*, p. 14.
34. Rabindranath Tagore, "Can Science Be Humanized?", in Das, vol. 3, p. 665.
35. Tagore, *Crisis*, p. 15.
36. Arendt, p. 20.

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