**[In an age of ressentiment  
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Reply by mahmoud saneipour

این عصر، عصر خشم نیست ، عصر تغییراتی است که نمی توان با مدل های سرمایه داری ، لیبرالیسم ، استعمار نو وفراخواستن ابرقدرت های فعلی حل وفصل کرد ، منطقی وارد میدان بحث وهرمنوتیک گفتاری بوجود آمده است که از جنس "حق وحقیقت " است وتا موقعی که کشورهائی نظیر انگستان ، امریکا وبعضی دیگر امیدشان به سیستم های اخیر حکومت ، بازار واقتصاد ورویه های فعلی است ، راه بجائی نمی برند ، همان علتی که این تغییرات را تحمیل کرده است ، همان علت باعث حل این معضلات خواهد بود بدون شک ، راه حل های اعصار مختلف تغییر کرده ، چون ماهیت تغییرات ، راه حل های خودش را می طلبد ، پیشرانان حل مسائل ، می توانند یک کشور ، یک فرد خبره ویا یک رهبر جهانی باشد

This age isn’t an age of ressentiment, it is an age that has especial Changes those cannot be Settlement whit models of Capitalism, Liberalism and the Summons of present superpowers, and it has created a logical discussion and vocal hermeneutic that is from gender of “right and truth” and while many countries like England, America and so on, they their hope be to governmental lately systems, to like procedure of market and economics’ manners, they are going to miscarry way (nowhere) , because , the same cause has imposed these changes , it is like cause can be shoved these problems ,no doubt, it has changed solutions in different ages , because ,it is needed the same nature of the changes for their solutions, the   
Initiators of problems solvers are from a country , an expert person , or a global leader.

**In an age of ressentiment**

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*‘Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that allusion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality.’*

– Henry David Thoreau, Walden ([1854](http://philosophy.wisc.edu/hunt/walden.htm))[i]

Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* ([1840](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/De_tocqueville_alexis/democracy_in_america_historical_critical_ed/democracy_in_america_vol_2.pdf)) said, ‘to live in freedom, one must grow used to a life full of agitation, change and danger’, else, one moves quickly from ‘unlimited freedom’ to a ‘craving for unlimited despotism’.

With the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, a Western model of ‘modernization’ embedded in ‘free-market capitalism’ triumphed across the world. As an economic system rooted in libertarian ideas on individualized rationality (driven by an ‘autonomous rights-bearing’ individual’s self-interest maximizing behavior); ‘free’ trade and an alluring faith in markets as self-equilibrating forces, *free-market capitalism*, metamorphosed itself as a religion of universal progress from the 1990s in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

After the 9/11 attack in the US, Francis Fukuyama in a [column](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/11/afghanistan.terrorism30) wrote, *‘modernity is a very powerful freight train that will not be derailed by recent events, however painful and unprecedented. Democracy and free markets will continue to expand over time as the dominant organizing principles for much of the world’*.

However, in times of ISIS expansion, *Brexit*, Trump’s Presidency, far-right extremist groups etc today; ‘modernization’ and ‘modernity’ driven by forces of democratization and free-market based capitalistic systems has ultimately led to, what George Santayana (a Spanish-American author) would call-an inciting ‘lava-wave of primitive blindness and violence’. One may appositely ask then: to what extent a blind belief in an economic system rooted in the transformative (cap)abilities of such ‘rational’ forms of ‘modernity’ mostly along capitalist lines got us into an age of ‘nihilistic violence’ and *ressentiment?;* *Ressentiment* and violence that has come along with an implosion of nation states in the Middle East and rise of far-right movements across the world. A complex question indeed and one that Pankaj Mishra seeks to address in his most recent book called *Age of Anger*.

*Age of Anger* expounds on explaining historical trends of *‘ressentiment’* (literally defined as a ‘psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred which cannot be satisfied’) that prevailed in 18th and 19th century Europe, North America and is now visible in an age of *‘mimetic desire…’*that is endlessly proliferating.In a world where*‘the modern promise of equality collides with massive disparities of power, education, status and property ownership’,* the backlash of globalization-with its discontents isn’t a new phenomenon and something that can be explained as a cyclical part of historical inevitability emerging within all forms of nation states, Mishra argues.

Our experience today with widespread emotions of racism, misogyny, rage, nihilistic violence, cynicism, ‘negative solidarity’ (coined by Hannah Arendt), is reflected by the demagoguery in geo-political discourse and in day to day discourses visible across public platforms including digital, social media networks. A global reality-what Nietzche defines as *‘a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts’*.

Revisiting *‘Ressentiment’*

*Ressentiment* as a sentiment, in today’s information age is spreading like a virus and has been amplified by the reach of social media. But, how did we get here? This is not simply because of some ideological battle between the East-West or part of a North-South divide but largely because of a mistaken assumption, often made by ‘liberal’ scholars, politicians, policymakers in their argument for ‘modernization’ along capitalistic lines i.e. in seeing human identity as fixed and singular, while ignoring how frequently it tends to be ‘manifold and self-conflicting’ in its existence with contradictory notions of ‘selfhood’.

The idea of liberalism evolving in 18th, 19th century Europe and North America, promoted values of individual freedom and liberty in an absolute sense, associating it’s pursuit with the attainment of one’s overall well-being. In classical economics too (like the development of other social sciences), individual development lied in the acquisition of private property rights; freedom to trade and be mobile; access to capital and in developing an entrepreneurial spirit, something we study even today in defining the factors of production in an economy.

In the 1990s (after the collapse of Soviet Union), a democratic revolution of human aspiration, as witnessed by Tocqueville in 19th century America and Adam Smith during the industrial revolution years, swept across the world. An increased emphasis on individual rights heightened awareness of ‘social discrimination’; ‘gender inequality’ with greater emphasis given to different sexual orientations-which was great.

However, as Pankaj Mishra points out in his book-the political ramifications of such universally prescribed homogeneous theory of liberalism remained more ambiguous and understudied. As a result, individuals today with different socio-cultural pasts find themselves ‘herded by capitalism and technology’ where unequal distribution of wealth have created ‘humiliating new hierarchies’ (earlier referred to as ‘negative solidarity’); and where redistributive justice, trickle-down economics, minority-rights etc. merely qualify as simple rhetoric for ‘cosmopolitan liberalists’.

While earlier shocks of modernity, triggered by techno-capitalistic systems of 19th century Europe were more easily observed by the social structures present then. Today, many countries (particularly emerging countries) in their quest to industrialize, ‘modernize’ are witnessing rising literacy, declining fertility rates on one hand, with escalating crime, suicide, depression rates on the other hand-finding themselves at ‘political and emotional conjunctures’ similar to the history of ‘modernized’ world itself (seen in 18th, 19th century France, Germany, Russia etc.).

Thus, what we see today is a widespread existential ‘moral and spiritual vacuum’, filled with ‘anarchic expressions of individuality, and mad quests for substitute religions and modes of transcendence’, similar to Dostoyevskey’s millennial fantasy of Moscow as the ‘Third Rome’ (19th century Europe), referred to by Mishra.

**Where we are now…**

The two converging forces of self-destruction today include-*a proliferating global civil war*and *the catastrophic effect of natural environment degradation*. There is no one way out in escaping these forces of self-destruction as most of the analytical reasoning used in explaining such forces by social scientists rely heavily on ‘materialist’ theoretical abstractions of homogeneously made references to ‘nation and capital’ through ‘techniques of statistics’.

In an age of *ressentiment*, one may conclude with more questions than offer any reasonable solutions. Questions like-To what extent ‘triumphant axioms’ of ‘individual autonomy and interest-seeking, formulated, sanctified and promoted by a privileged minority work for the majority in a crowded and inter-dependent world?; Are today’s young doomed (like many Europeans and Russians in the past) between a ‘sense of inadequacy’ and ‘fantasies of revenge’? and In times of advancing bureaucratization and rise of extreme-right based nationalist sentiments, what kind of ‘charismatic leaders’ do we need to offer escape from such a modern world, what Weber called as an ‘iron cage’?

As Mishra suggests- we may perhaps do well to go beyond some of the traditional, mainstream analytical tools of methods in seeking an answer to these questions and make the ‘irreducible human being, her/his fears, desires and resentments’ as the unit of our analysis.