Let us recapitulate the journey so far. We began with the narrative of crisis in the university and examined the various diagnoses. The existing diagnoses of the crisis in the institution of the university in India share a peculiar, puzzling feature: while all of them refer to a crisis in higher education, they do not talk about education at all. Instead, they are about a crisis in politics, the social fabric of the land or institutional faults. This is in striking contrast to the West where the crisis is discussed in terms of the conception of education and the formation of the student. In order to investigate the reasons for this difference, we turned to the Humboldtian ideal of education in Chapter II.

At one level, the debate on Bildung is a robust one. It involves the formation of the subject of education. Questions such as how can we form the subject of education into a harmonious whole, how is character shaped through the pursuit of Science or Wissenschaft, what are the faculties we must develop and what kind of institutional structures must we build in order to enable Bildung are discussed in a rigorous manner. However, we also see how Bildung as the actualization of the self (or what comes to be called “the expressive self”) is a specific cultural ideal of education which rests on the theological idea of “formed according to God’s image.” This notion gets secularized into “formed according to an original model,” where one develops according to one’s inner laws or purpose. This normative ideal governs the formation of the subject of education where each individual is called upon to actualize one’s true self, develop one’s individuality which is both unique and made determinate only through one’s own moral, rationally justified choices. It is thus character is shaped; the will is actualized, leading to the emergence of a self with a personality. This picture of man which emerged in Europe, as we saw in Chapter II, does not come about all of a sudden but is an outcome of social-institutional arrangements that are at work in Europe for centuries and is
enabled by religion, the church, the monastic order and its spiritual practices, the notion of God’s plan, the centrality of the idea of obedience to God’s moral law in people’s lives, the activity of the medieval universities and later also the state. These social-institutional arrangements were the necessary background for the notion of formation implied by debates on Bildung as self-actualization to emerge as well as to sustain the set of virtues required for the practice of Wissenschaft.

The cultural conception of Bildung becomes universalized as a theory of education with German Romantics like Kant and Herder attributing to humanity itself a historical telos which would be realized. When this normative conception of education comes to India under conditions of British colonialism, we see that the British find their picture of man breaking down. Forms of conceptual dissonance erupt in the debates of the early nineteenth century. These debates converge around the concept of truth and the lack of moral formation in Indian subjects. Thus, in Chapter III, I sketch the encounter between the Europeans and natives to show that the absence of certain normative principles, specially expressed as “want of truth” in the natives, makes the British judge the natives as immoral. The explanation for native character is sought in the “false religion” of Hinduism, an entity that is put into place only during this time. This leads to education becoming an attempt to reform the natives, meant to turn them away from their traditions and initiate them into a normative framework. Traditions come under scrutiny for an appraisal of whether they are manifestations of true beliefs or not. A new mode of judgement, reflection and thinking about actions emerges wherein the tendency is to bring everyday actions under the norm of truth. Initiating the natives into this normative framework such that they learn to respond to moral norms/principles takes priority over nurturing learning, self-understanding and genuine reflection on experience.
How do the natives receive the learning goals? Chapter IV deals with the nature of deflection produced in the way the natives learn the goals posited and examines the issue of translation of concepts. It shows how the structures of thought that are inherited from the Orientalist frames are transmitted through modern education and social reform. In the process changes occur both in the way the native concepts are used and in the way new concepts are made sense of, resulting in a rapid population of concepts which fail to illuminate our experience. The chapter also attempts to make sense of Trevelyan’s statement that modern education, creates a “conscience” as a way to grasp its nature. The idea of initiating one into Science, where one understands forms and structures of understanding of two different cultures, becomes subordinate to this large scale process of moral transformation. What could have been a scientific enterprise to inquire into different ways of going about the world becomes an evaluative one, leading to judgements about the lack of moral formation and autonomy in the natives.

It is Gandhi and Tagore (Chapter V), I argue, who provide us with the diagnosis that the contemporary scholars completely miss. The crisis is not one of social fabric, the dullness of the Indian student or one of institutions working inefficiently; it is a crisis in education and learning. For the first time, the significance of education and learning to one’s life rather than education as moral reform of either individuals or traditions is emphasized at a nation-wide level. What are the obstructions that come in the way of learning, what kind of an ethos was colonial education generating and what prevents us from making sense of our experience are questions posed for the first time. We can see Gandhi’s actions as conceptually aiming against the modern education’s notion of morality as an acquisition of moral principles. These principles are seen as expressions of one’s deepest commitments on which to base one’s actions and are generative of identities. Thus, the idea of character formation as the actualization of will served to produce a positive conception of the self and identity. This, as
the national movement made evident, was generative of violence. A positive conception of the self (possessing free-will) which based its action on the choice of one moral principle over the other was already to have a “third-person” view of oneself. We can now see how when Kant, in order to save the “agency” of man from the causal laws of nature, posits the idea of man as a moral agent and as naturally possessing free-will, he already inscribes man as an object. That free-will is an “essential”, “natural” property of man is a pre-theoretical supposition in the Kantian scheme, a concept with a long history in theological disputes. It is through free-will, man would collaborate with God to realize his plan on earth. While divine attributes are now transferred to man, the theological origins of these attributes become invisible over time and emerge as self-evident truths, thereby blocking all further inquiries. It is this anthropological picture of man (on which rests a theory of Science) that cracks when the idea travels to another culture. In the absence of the background conditions within which the conception of education and its attendant categories are rendered intelligible, an acute anxiety around the incomplete moral formation of the Indian student arises in the late nineteenth century.

In the way Gandhi and Tagore conceive of education, there is no prior form or a normative ideal of what a human is according to which an individual needs to be realized. Instead, for Gandhi, education is insertion into long-existing, larger milieu of learning and traditions of activity. Intellectual and ethical virtues here are not acquired through the acquisition of moral theories and principles but through participation in traditions of activity, embedded within larger networks of social relations. The ends are internal to the practice and one submits to these internal ends which have been elaborated over centuries. In other words, one’s self is not given prior to these domains but one is constituted within these domains of actions. Thus, Gandhi makes craft the basis of his education as one historically-specific way of responding to his times where colonial education had become an obstruction to learning. Through a
process of training in the practical art/craft, as a practitioner and learner, one acquires the necessary ability to make the right distinctions in the domain and trains individual wants as well as desires in order to be able to perform the right action. Right action is not the result of “a mental event,” which requires one to bring the will in alignment with truths of reason but acquires its coherence and is rational, from within the idiom of the tradition or activity in which it is performed. Thus, when violence erupts as part of the nationalist movement, Gandhi’s educational task is performed outside formal institutions by creating a milieu of learning with an emphasis on spinning. It is through insertion into the domain of practical activity that normative structures that institute a third-person understanding of ourselves and impede our relations to each other are sought to be removed. External goals are severed and one is re-inserted into practices with internal goals.

Why is it that such a process can take place only outside the colonial institutions? Here, Gandhi and Tagore converge in their diagnosis. They locate the problem in culturally different ways of going about the world and the impact of Western structures of thought on a practical form of life. While for Gandhi, Western conception of morality that is premised on acquisition of moral principles is destructive of practical forms of life, for Tagore it is the opacity and rigidity of Western ideas and concepts in our lives and our failure to see them as extensions of a particular form of life that the West is, that prevents learning. This lack of recognition of the relation between knowledge forms and the larger ethos of respective cultures which generates and fosters a particular form of knowing, has become an impediment in the process of education. As Tagore seems to suggest, it only generates “an illusion” of thinking or of cognition taking place.

Tagore brings to sharp relief our peculiar predicament: we are inheritors of two traditions, the Western and our own. Both these learning traditions, Tagore recognizes as robust, living
traditions by themselves, worthy of being learnt. Yet, in the cultural encounter between the two, both have come to elude us. Western ideas and concepts come to us reified, like truths written on stone, rather than as tools of active reflection which can be inquired into, while the concepts and thought structures of our own traditions, even as they shape our experiences and determine the way we go about the world, have been rendered mute. While Tagore does not have the resources to formulate the problem in terms of our life with concepts, it is clear that it remains his primary concern.

In Gandhi and Tagore, we see the presence of alternative lines of thinking which prioritizes traditions, actions and a milieu of learning. Both emphasize that it is the erasure or weakening of self and identities (extricating oneself from “the thraldom of the self”) and not actualizing them that true education must make possible. The basic unit of thinking is action where action (not as an isolated, random activity but as an action in an elaborated tradition of activity) itself is embodied knowledge. To be able to do is to know, thereby emphasizing the skill-like or performative nature of all knowledge. Thus, Gandhi likens even ethical learning to a skill learnt through practice. However, here skill must not be thought of in the sense of a mechanical, repetitive action. The very fact that acquiring a skill requires you to subject yourself to the discipline the activity demands, learn the valid procedures and distinctions within the particular domain of activity from the best of practitioners, cultivate judgement and sensibility on a range of issues internal to the practice as well as with respect to the larger social relationships the practice is embedded in, improve upon the practice itself and solve the problems of the domain means that this requires a certain degree of reflection.

The presence of alternative lines of thinking in Gandhi and Tagore also gives us a clue to understand European accounts on indigenous education (Chapter VI). While Gandhi and Tagore do not dispute the cognitive value of natural sciences, they persist in drawing the
sphere of education differently and recognize other forms of knowledge as more important. Their notion of education and learning is far more encompassing than what is indicated by the sciences and the form of knowledge (in terms of causal explanation of events, actions and phenomenon in the universe that is conceived as a separate, meaningful domain in itself) they make possible. Thus, Gandhi and Tagore do not locate education in the colonial institutions. Similarly, throughout our discussion of nineteenth century debates, we see that the Europeans remain impervious or blind to traditions as a form of knowledge or as practices that cultivate in us a certain reflective attitude towards action. The “prejudice” of the Europeans, where I use “prejudice” not in a negative, deprecatory sense but in the Gadamerean sense of pre-understanding which is necessary for any kind of comprehension to take place, makes them see traditions and practices as a system of beliefs rendering this domain as the remnant of a past era. The search for a separate domain of moral theories or doctrines which enable moral formation and the absence of these in indigenous education leads the Europeans to conclude that moral formation in Indian culture is absent. As a result various forms of ethical learning that are transmitted from one generation to another performatively remain unnoticed. The different kinds of repertoire present in the culture that shape one’s conduct and judgement that thrived as part of indigenous education either get evaluated as religious, mythological, mystical, inferior, “reiterative”, “repetitive,” under-developed, or get elided altogether. The Europeans also miss the unity of intellectual and moral virtues expected of practitioners, unlike in the West where these had emerged as two separate domains of study. These very structures of thought is what we see re-emerge in Gandhi’s Nayee Talim. The chapter also makes evident the challenges we continue to face in our attempts to know pre-modern India.
Knowledge, Traditions and Institutions

The thesis points to the need to rethink the relation between traditions and knowledge. Often, traditions and knowledge have been considered as two different and oppositional poles. One approach has been to see knowledge as opposed to traditions, where traditions are seen as obsolete practices and as remnants of bygone eras that resist reform. Here, to “arrive” at knowledge is to recognize the “falsity” of these traditions. This mode of thinking about traditions is largely inherited by us from the social reform period and perpetuated by modern education, including the disciplines of history, sociology, anthropology among others. It continues to be dominant in the way we have approached the notion of traditions in university education in India. The other approach has been to see traditions as knowledge of the past embodied in various forms of representational activities which we need to study. While this may be a legitimate study in itself begun by the Orientalists, the restricted understanding of traditions takes away the living force they are in our everyday life. The third approach, largely belonging to the domain of cultural ethnology, has been to think of “traditional knowledge” as a distinct, ghettoized category by itself. A more productive formulation would be to see traditions as human endeavours or forms of practical knowledge elaborated over a period of time that have been passed on from generation to generation.

Reformulated in this way, knowledge is knowledge only within a tradition. Different traditions of activity generate specific forms of knowing and develop corresponding means of transmission. The university, whose goal is formation through the pursuit of Science or Wissenschaft, then is one such tradition of activity that initiates you into a study of objects through cultivation of a theoretical and conceptual orientation. Here, we are introduced to disciplinary forms of knowledge which require us to learn the norms specific to each domain, work at inherited problems and learn the valid procedures, acquire the intellectual distinctions
necessary in order to learn, refine and improve upon the practice. Through the pursuit of
Wissenschafter, one’s character is formed and shaped. However, it is by no means the only
tradition of activity. Nor do we need to see it as a privileged one. We can now see the
problem with Sanjay Seth’s thesis that the modern subject who sets the object apart in the
process of knowing it never emerged in India. Such a statement equates the distinctions of the
subject and object that emerge only within a certain practice (within the specific activity of
doing Wissenschafter) with the very nature of human being. We can at most say a certain
tradition of activity that we have inherited from the West which requires us to cultivate a
particular, detached mode of engagement with the world has not been successfully learnt in
these parts of the world. This not only allows us to recognize that there are other ways of
inhabiting the world and engaging with it which are not theoretical in nature but also shifts
our attention to generating the necessary conditions for learning the specific mode of
engagement that the university embodies.

If the university embodies one kind of practice among others, what is it to learn the practice
well and improve upon it? While the sciences might have served colonial purposes or have
been used for purposes of moral reform, that does not render these activities themselves as
inherently unjust. They are part of valuable, cognitive activities we have inherited from our
colonial past. However, the question now becomes what is it to learn this practice well, given
the absence of certain enabling conditions. One way is to bring to bear the Nayee Talim
perspective, which emphasizes the priority of practice, to the learning of Wissenschafter that
the university embodies. While the propositional or informational content of science has
travelled rather successfully, the craft of scientific research which can be learnt only by
immersing oneself in a milieu of learning has been learnt less successfully. One of the
reasons is that science has been emphasized in India for reasons of “modernity” or as a
symbol of power and prestige, or for spreading a certain form of rationalism. Less emphasis
has been given to the learning of science as one would learn a craft or art. The other reason is expressed in Polyani’s casual statement that he made more than fifty years ago which is as relevant to us as then:

While the articulate contents of science are successfully taught all over the world in hundred of new universities, the unspecified art of scientific research has not yet penetrated to many of these. The regions of Europe in which the scientific method first originated 400 years ago are scientifically still more fruitful today, in spite of their impoverishment, than several overseas areas where much more money is available for scientific research. Without the opportunity offered to young scientists to serve an apprenticeship in Europe and without the migration of European scientists to the new countries, research centres overseas could hardly have made much headway. (Polanyi 2012, 55)

Polyani’s observation draws attention to the fact that while universities as physical structures, disciplines, their methods and standards of evaluation travel, the larger ethos which sustains and cultivates the “unspecified art of scientific research” does not travel so easily. By focussing on this larger ethos that sustains the practice, the thesis also fleshes out this larger ethos that Polyani implies – the *attitudes* or stances towards life that the particular ethos generates (Balagangadhar 1994; N. Rao 2002). In the nineteenth century debates, the differences in the way the natives deal with the world are constantly remarked upon by the British. It appears in the early debates around religion and truth where the missionaries observe that the natives do not ask if their practices are true or false, in Ballantyne’s observation of the pundits who learn European theories about eclipse but continue to adhere to the domain of ritual and ceremonies, in Trevelyan’s anticipation that modern education creates a “conscience” by which he means an attitude where thought and knowledge (ascertaining true beliefs) precedes action and in Stein where he complains that Indians students cannot give any justification for their practices and do not possess the strength of belief. In all these cases, their complaint is that the natives do not display the attitude of seeing their practices as expressions of a system of beliefs. Even when they are introduced to
a practice which emphasizes the strength of belief (like in the case of Ballantyne’s pundits), it appears that they learn it like one learns a skill specific to a domain. If we distance ourselves from attempts to hierarchize cultures based on this anthropological observation and assessment, like the Europeans of nineteenth century were prone to do, then an interesting question arises. While a skill can be more easily learnt, how does one learn the necessary attitude that immersion in a particular ethos cultivates? (N. Rao 2002, 487)\(^{245}\)

By showing that the institutional crisis is linked to the conception of education and forms of knowledge, the thesis also compels us to understand and address the crisis differently. Much of our contemporary effort at understanding the crisis in the university has focussed on reasons external to education and learning. By directing our attention to the conception of education, learning and forms of knowledge, I point to where we must locate the problem and the solution to it.

**Experimenting with Institutional Models**

The thesis also extracts two significant institutional models from our debates in the past which emphasize education and learning: One is the Gandhian model of Nayee Talim and the other is Santiniketan. There may of course be other models that the nationalist problematization of education put forward that are worth experimenting with. Nayee Talim is still the model we see around us outside the university, especially in the way music and other form of performative arts continue to be learnt in India. Can the Nayee Talim model be extended to other forms of higher learning? The Nayee Talim model focuses on cultivating

\(^{245}\) Also see Arnab Rai Choudhuri (1985). In his illuminating article, he points out how besides funding and communication, a proper “psychological gestalt” is necessary to practice Western science outside the West and why it is difficult for non-Western scientists to acquire it. This “psychological gestalt” is more easily produced when one is inserted into the existing social-institutional arrangements or the milieu of scientific practice in the West. Thus, the focus is on the different kinds of learning configurations that have developed in the West and the non-West over centuries. Insertion into these pre-existing arrangements tends to produce certain kinds of orientation, irrespective of whether one is Western, Asian, Christian, Muslim or “Hindu.”
practitioners who enter various domains linked to their immediate society around them in
dynamic ways. Thus, Gandhi was of the opinion that medical graduates must be attached to
hospitals and agricultural and engineering students to related industries. While the notion of
an “industry” implies profit-making and is embedded within a structure of capitalism, Gandhi
was critical of capitalism and made a distinction between learners and workers. The
emphasis, instead, is on creating learners, practitioners and exemplars in each domain.
Intellectual and ethical virtues come together in the pursuit of the practice, where it is
learning and problem-solving that permeates and drives the environment. The advantage of
this model is that it also allows you to recognize the form of learning the university embodies
as a practice to be learnt, like one would learn a craft. A scientist too would be a practitioner.

The prototype for the second model is provided by Santiniketan. Just like Humboldt drew on
antecedent models to put forward his idea of a university, we can draw from Tagore’s model
meaningfully to suit our contemporary needs. While Tagore too emphasized the performative
arts, he simultaneously put forward the idea of scientific research in “The Comparative Study
of World Cultures” as one of the goals of his university. This was also one of the goals of the
Humboldtian university. However, due to theological concepts and the picture of man that
determined and came to pervade our theoretical frame work (I have traced this effect in
Chapter III and IV and VI), the university has ceased to be a live, dynamic place it can
otherwise be. As Tagore put it, we took the place of Western thought in our lives as self-
evident, reifying them and making them “rigid truths” instead of inquiring into them. Thus,
Tagore insisted that we recognize the West and East as different cultural unities. However,
Tagore was unable to formulate the nature of this unity in each case. Today, we are in a better
position to extend Tagore’s insight and know that the category of religion played a non-trivial
role in generating certain structures of experience and forms of knowledge in the West as
well as in the way the non-west has been described and understood so far.
Tagore then gives us a way of understanding the impact of colonialism differently. Often colonialism has generally been understood in terms of economic and political disenfranchisement. However, it has less frequently been understood in terms of ‘conceptual disenfranchisement,’ the loss of concepts that is a result of a cross-cultural encounter. The emphasis is on the disjunction between concepts that constitute our experience and concepts through which we describe them. Accounts that make this obvious dissociation between concepts and experience invisible, as Cora Diamond notes in the case of language of morality in the West, may themselves be seen as instances of such dissociation. Diamond asks if the relationship between experience and thought can go wrong in ways which make people badly off in comparison with some conception of what is appropriate? Can the relation go wrong in ways which affect the well-being of a community's life (Diamond 1988, 270)? While Diamond poses these questions to understand moral concepts and their relation to experience in the West, the answer to these questions by Tagore and Gandhi is in the affirmative. It is precisely this disjunction that Gandhi and Tagore seek to visibilize by highlighting the conceptual loss that colonialism has brought about.

The need of the hour then is to continue Tagore’s vision for a university further by taking the inquiry Gandhi and he began into the two cultures, further. Today, there is an implicit assumption that our current problems no longer have any relation to our colonial inheritances. Therefore, while we may acknowledge the contributions of Tagore and Gandhi, we assume that their diagnosis is not relevant anymore. However, as the thesis shows, the genesis of many of our current predicaments can be traced back to the nineteenth century. The normative evaluative frame of morality within which education is embedded persists even after colonialism has ended. Yet, postcolonial India has largely ignored the diagnosis
forwarded by thinkers like Tagore and Gandhi. Any proposal for a Tagore’s Liberal Arts University which acknowledges Tagore’s contribution as an intellectual, must therefore take his diagnosis of the problem of education and the institution that emerged out of this diagnosis equally seriously.

Areas for Further Inquiry

The thesis opens out areas of further inquiry with regard to the role of conscience in secularization. Conscience, the concealed ground of normative ethics, emerges as salient in Indian debates precisely because the conditions that sustain the activity that conscience refers to, do not exist here and have to be created through English literature and human sciences. Though conscience is a tacit assumption in most Western theories, it is only in another culture, it is rendered visible as crucial to formation. In the West, the knowledge of prior moral law or normative principles that is essential to the activity of conscience is inculcated through the church, the structure of religion and the Bible. With secularization, the concept of God’s will and moral commands get pushed within oneself. To act on certain grounds, in accordance to truths of reason, is to act like God. To know more about the relation between conscience and secularization is to understand the very nature of secularization and the kind of normative thought it entails.

Vivek Dhareshwar suggests that in the West “the secularisation process that lays the foundation for the positive self to emerge does so by destroying the practices that had

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246 It is noteworthy that post-independent India has largely overlooked the various attempts made by the nationalists to rethink education. The Radhakrishnan Commission Report (1950) is refreshing in that it remains one of the few reports which attempts to relate the pursuit of science to the formation of the individual unlike the documents of today. However, at various places we can see that the report is bogged down under the weight of having to envisage the university as the primary institution to realise the goals of justice, defined as equality, liberty and fraternity. In the Humboldtian ideal, on the other hand, the person is always more than the citizen. Strangely, none of the alternative models put forth by the nationalist debate on education, including Santiniketan, are seen as alternatives to be encouraged. It must also be noted that most of these alternative visions did not reject the natural sciences as much as limit its sphere. It is only in the domain of moral sciences or ethics that they charted a different course.
sustained what Foucault calls spiritual knowledge” (what Dhareshwar calls “experiential” or practical knowledge, Dhareshwar 2010, 54). We can now surmise that this process of secularization involved the form of self-examination that we associate with conscience, which laid the ground for the expressive, positive conception of self. In a practical form of life where moral self-governance rests on training one’s desires by inserting oneself in practical domains, conscience brings a form of reflection on action where action has to derive from the knowledge of prior moral truths/principles which can only see our experience and tradition as deficient and incomplete.

That the universalisation of the monastic practice of examination of conscience could be linked to the very nature of “thought” as it developed in the West is suggested by some philosophers. For instance, Gilbert Ryle, in his famous *The Concept of Mind*, observes: “When the epistemologists’ concept of consciousness first became popular, it seems to have been in part a transformed application of the Protestant notion of conscience. The Protestants had to hold that a man could know the moral state of his soul and the wishes of God without the aid of confessors and scholars; they spoke therefore of the God-given ‘light’ of private conscience” (2009, 141). Scholars have also pointed out that consciousness and conscience were represented by the same word till the seventeenth century. For example, Boris Hennig argues that Descartes (who is often credited with having coined the modern notion of consciousness) used the word *conscientia* to refer to consciousness, a traditional moral notion that he borrowed from the scholastics. He used it to refer to mean both moral and epistemic conscience where Descartes “characterizes the basic activity of the scientist as conscientious thinking.” Thus, ‘*conscientia,*’ Hennig notes, “refers to the evaluative knowledge of an ideal observer,” involving a “double thought”, an “awareness of what we are doing and of what we should be doing. This awareness is constitutive of thought, so that there can be no thought
without it” (Hennig 2010, 25). To investigate the relation further will also tell us more about how the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* or judgement is transformed by conscience.

By examining the various moments when education is problematized in India, the thesis also visibilizes another conception of education which Gandhi and Tagore bring to sharp relief. Through an analysis of Gandhi and Tagore, who clearly draw from Indian traditions, I have only indicated that another conception of education is at work. If “knowledge of the self” is deemed important and if the “self” is neither an object nor the subject with a will to be actualized, how do we understand the innumerable texts and practices in the tradition that problematize “the self”? Would this lead us to an alternative model of thinking about formation involving concepts such as Manas, Buddhi, Chitta and Ahamkara? Today, as scholars point out, we have no easy access to these concepts. An inquiry into alternative ways of thinking about education other than what Western thought has made possible, would therefore remain an important and an urgent task.