

Lecture 3:

Global Environmentalism – II

Course: Environment and Politics in India

‘Environment’ in Sociological Theory

Persisting environmental catastrophe and responses:

What did Marx, Weber and Durkheim have to say?

- ❑ Weber: Nothing at all about the natural world.
- ❑ Durkheim: Recognises historical change, role of human-nature relationship. But NO theoretical analysis of impacts of social/economic processes on nature.
- ❑ Marx and Engels: Man-nature dialectic, Role of labour in transforming nature, alienation from nature.

Extending Marx/Marxism: Nature is ‘historically produced’.

Modern sociology and environmental theory

- ❑ Anthony Giddens: Need to move beyond the capitalism/industrialism debate. Capitalism + Industrialism -> Ecological catastrophe
- ❑ Ulrich Beck: Risk Society. Institutionalized response to old/NEW risks, no individual/institutional RESPONSIBILITY/accountability. “Organized irresponsibility” and its social/political impacts.

‘Environment’ in Sociological Theory

Social Theory on Environment and Politics:

- Giddens: Environmental movements as “politics mobilised by ideal values and moral imperatives”.
- Habermas: Environmental movements as “response of the life world to its colonization”.
- Need to DEMOCRATIZE state-citizen relationship.
 - Limitations of representative democracy.
 - Role of “civil society”, emergence of new local/regional/national/international groups.
 - Habermas and the need for rational democratic discourse in the ‘public sphere’.
 - Beck, ‘ecological democracy’ and the need to politicize policy-making spaces.

Roots of Western Environmentalism

THREE factors contributing to the WESTERN debate on environmental ethics:

- Lynn White's indictment of Christianity (*Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*). Self-reflection, self-scrutiny.
- John Muir's indictment of "philistinism" and "commercialism". Against equating "America" with the \$. Beginnings of the "wilderness" movement.
- The character of temperate ecosystems. NOT the "wild"/cruel/difficult tropical ecosystem.

Made it easy to romanticize "nature".

LYNN WHITE:

- ❑ The Bible asserts man's dominion over nature and establishes a trend of anthropocentrism.
- ❑ Christianity makes a distinction between man (formed in God's image) and the rest of creation, which has no "soul" or "reason" and is thus inferior.

THREE Environmental Utopias

Responding to Industrialization: GLOBAL/Western Trends in the Environmental Movement

AGRARIANISM:

❑ Ideal civilization: GO BACK TO THE LAND

- ✓ Grain-based
- ✓ Peasant society
- ✓ Technology is human-scale
- ✓ Strong bonds of community
- ✓ Harmonious relationship between village and town

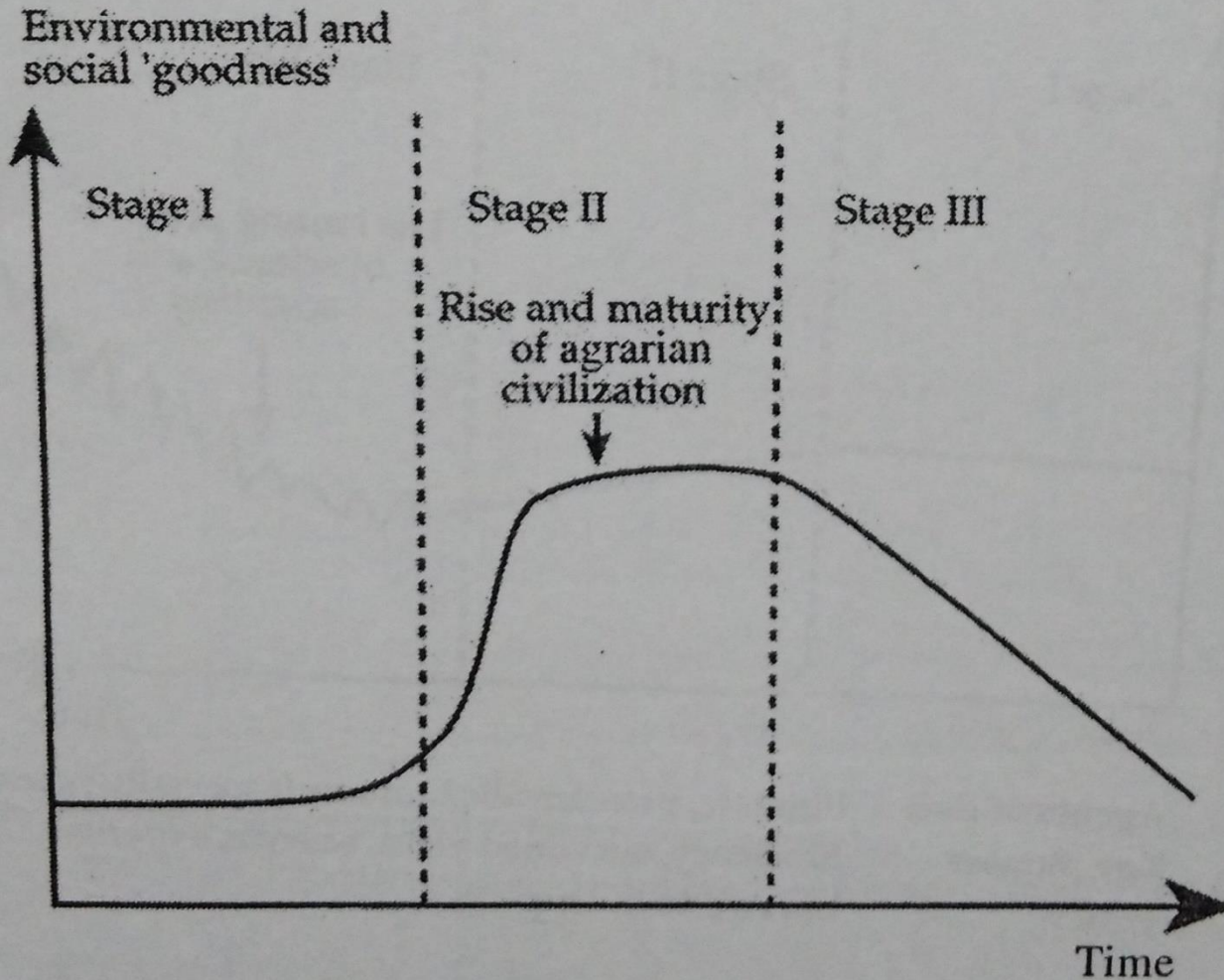
Village -> Food, health, social bonding

Town -> Wealth, knowledge, energy

❑ Both TRIBAL and INDUSTRIAL societies are not good.

KEY thinkers: Gandhi, Tagore, Thomas Jefferson

AGRARIANISM



Agents of Evil

Key phrases

Policy

The Machine, materialistic philosophy

Technology 'on the human scale', back to the land

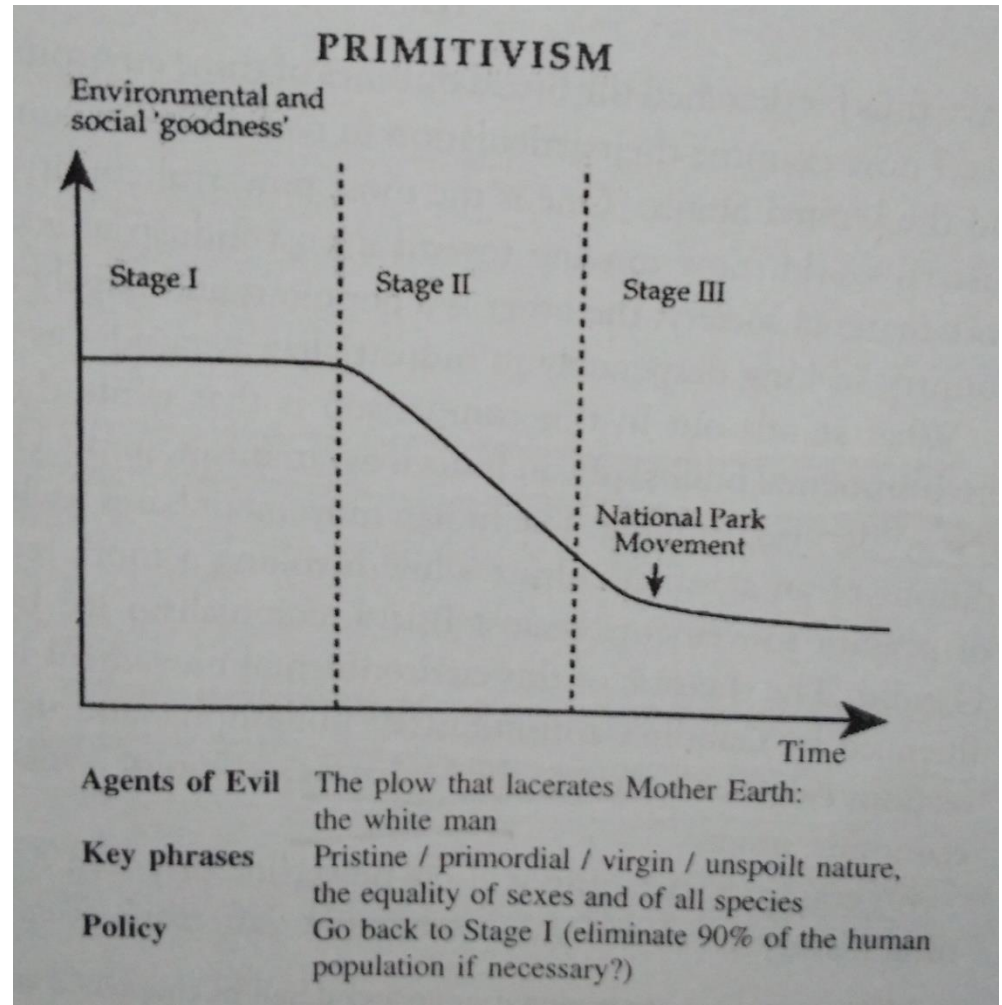
Go back to Stage II

THREE Environmental Utopias

WILDERNESS/PRIMITIVISM

❑ Ideal civilization:

- ✓ Pre-agrarian, tribal Society, rudely interrupted by the white man/colonialism
- ✓ Forest-based, hunter-gatherer
- ✓ Low-level technology. No use of ploughs/industrialism
- ✓ Strong bonds of community

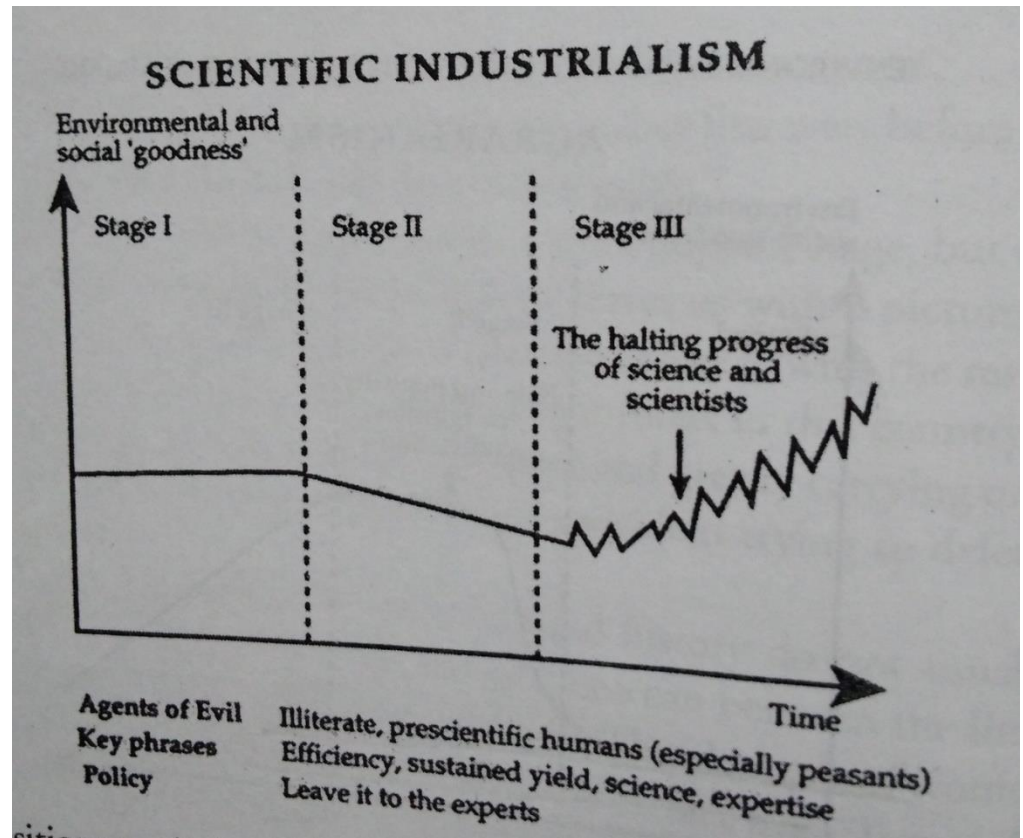


THREE Environmental Utopias

SCIENTIFIC INDUSTRIALISM

❑ Ideal civilization:

- ✓ Industrial society
- ✓ Tamed industrialism
- ✓ Rejects 'anarchy' of the market
- ✓ 'Rational' program of state control
- ✓ Legislations/activist State



THREE Environmental Utopias

- All three trends COULD represent three perspectives on the human-nature relationship.
 - *Scientific study/Conquest of nature*
 - *Human submission to “natural processes”*
 - *A golden mean of “stewardship” and “sustainable use”*

DOMINANT Models of environmentalism?

- ☐ US: Wilderness. Preservationism *versus* Utilitarianism
- ☐ India: Agrarianism. Subsistence *versus* Commerce, Local *versus* national, peasants *versus* industry

In BOTH India and the US, SCIENTIFIC INDUSTRIALISM is the enemy of the environmental movement.

Landmarks in Global Environmentalism

- 1962: Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring*
- 1972: Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* study
- 1972: UN conference on environment at Stockholm
- 1973: Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*
- 1977: Hirsh's *The Social Limits to Growth*
- 1983: Establishment of the World Commission on Environment and Development (known as the Brundtland Commission).
- 1987: Brundtland Commission's *Our Common Future*

'Silent Spring' Is Now Noisy Summer

Pesticides Industry
Up in Arms Over
a New Book



Rachel Carson Stirs
Conflict—Producers
Are Crying 'Foul'

By JOHN M. LEE

The \$300,000,000 pesticides industry has been highly irritated by a quiet woman author whose previous works on science have been praised for the beauty and precision of the writing.

The author is Rachel Carson.

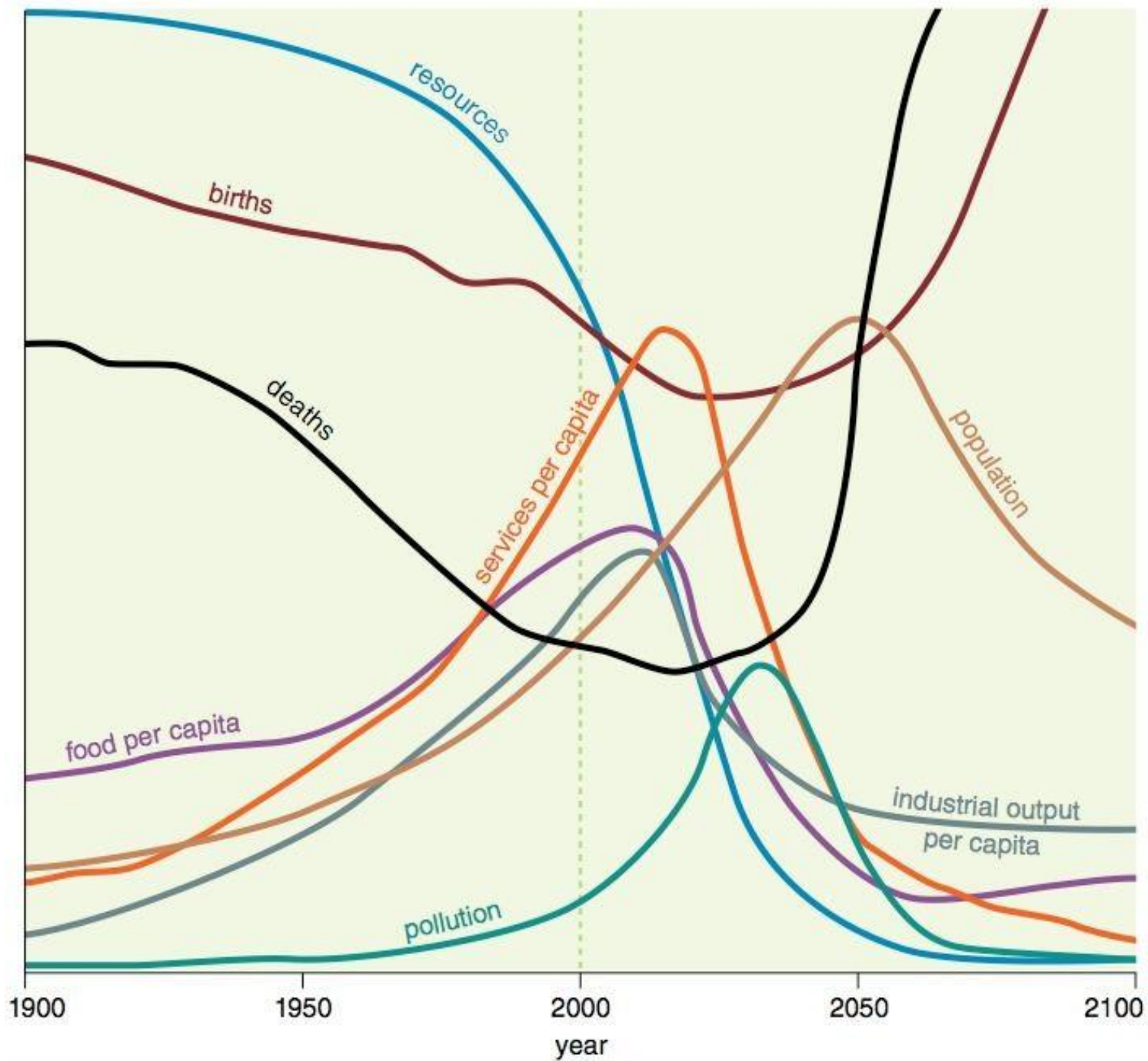
fending the use of their products. Meetings have been held in Washington and New York. Statements are being drafted and counter-attacks plotted.

A drowsy midsummer has suddenly been enlivened by the greatest uproar in the pesticides industry since the cranberry



"If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years."

—The Club of Rome, *The Limits of Growth* (1972)



Landmarks in Global Environmentalism

How should the 'third' world respond to global environmentalism?

- Is environmentalism simply a tool to stop 'development' in poor/developing countries?
- Does 'pollution' exist ONLY in the poor countries?

EXAMPLES: Responses from Brazil, India, UK, US.

ANIL AGARWAL:

❑ Roots of western environmental problems:

- ❖ Issues of WASTE DISPOSAL. Air/Water pollution, toxic industrial/nuclear wastes.
- ❖ Need to PRESERVE landscapes/species.

❑ Roots of Third World environmental problems:

- ❖ Lack/Misuse of resources – forests, soil, water
- ❖ Need to provide for domestic/Western industry. EXAMPLE: Japan's Timber requirements.