



# Critical Thinking

## For Arts Administrators & Managers

Himanshu Desai, October 2016, Ahmedabad

# Things to note before we start:

- Please note that this session is intended to be merely a group discussion/ conversation on philosophical concepts that could be considered vital to Arts Administration & Management.
- These slides are merely notes to cover essential topics and therefore not necessary to follow strictly. Please feel free to ask for a soft copy of these slides via email, should you think that you need them for future reference.

## Sections:

1. Introduction to Arts Administration & Management
2. Group Discussion
3. Introduction to critical thinking
4. Exercise in critical thinking
5. Philosophy that could be relevant to study of Heritage Management



**SECTION ONE**

# **Arts Administration & Management**

# What is arts administration/management?

- A field that concerns business operations around arts organizations or cultural public service.
- Arts administrators are often more focussed on facilitating operations rather than production, which is often the domain of the artists.
- The duties of an arts administrator can include staff management, marketing, budget management, public relations, fundraising, program development and evaluation, and board relations.

# How is arts management different from any other?

1. Operates mostly in public domain as opposed to a private company
2. Mostly deals with non-profit scenarios
3. Depends primarily on public funding and, or government support
4. Promotes intangible heritage in order to preserve tangible heritage
5. The main human resource to manage are often not employees or contractors, but independent artists, thinkers & academia
6. Main stakeholders are often the public and, or public service organizations
7. Business continuity is dependent on fundraising, documenting, publishing, and arts programming, rather than profit or financial gain.

# The Industry

Arts Administration & Management organizations and agencies include professional non-profit entities e.g.:

- Theaters
- Museums
- Symphonies
- Jazz organizations
- Opera houses
- Ballet companies

... and smaller professional profit seeking arts-related organizations e.g.:

- Auction houses
- Art galleries
- Music companies etc.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

How many of these exist in your city/ town?

- Theaters/ Theatre groups
- Folk/Tribal/Traditional Arts & Crafts Organizations
- Museums/ Archives
- Symphonies/ Music Conservatories
- Opera houses
- Ballet/ dance companies
- Auction houses/ Antique shops
- Art galleries/ Design
- Music production companies etc.
- Publishing houses
- Public Libraries

What kind of patronage or public funding agencies are available in the city?





SECTION TWO

# Critical Thinking

# What is Critical Thinking

Making reasonable judgements based on a healthy balance between LOGIC and THOUGHT:

≠ not same as merely logical thinking

≠ not same as merely philosophical thought

= it is indeed a balance between the two

# Critical Thinking Skills

- Curiosity
- Questioning
- Skepticism
- Analyses
- Criticism
- Humility

# Critical Thinking ≠ Criticism

## KNOW THE DIFFERENCE:

- **Critical thinking**  
= logical analysis  
+ philosophical thought
- **Critiquing**  
= constructive criticism  
(includes both appreciation  
and criticism)
- **Criticism**  
= can be based on mere personal  
taste or opinion



# Critical Thinking Exercise

*The DOXA\* test*

\*The meaning of *DOXA* will be revealed along with the test results.

*The DOXA test:*  
**PART ONE**

1. Reflect for a few moments on your leisure time activities in the last one month i.e. September 2016.
2. Try to recollect roughly how much time and money you spent on the following:
  - a. Watching television i.e. soaps, serials etc.
  - b. Going to movies
  - c. Shopping
  - d. Listening to pop music
  - e. Eating out
  - f. Attending parties
  - g. Etc.
3. Write down a rough sum of money and amount of time consumed by these leisure activities.

*The DOXA test:*  
**PART TWO**

1. Try to recollect roughly how much time and money you spent on the following in the last one month i.e. September 2016:
  - a. Attending a classical music concert
  - b. Attending a folk theatre performance or concert
  - c. Viewing an art exhibition/ visiting a museum
  - d. Visiting a library or an archive
  - e. Attending a lecture outside of your field of study or interest
  - f. Attending a local community event
  - g. Volunteering for a cause or social service
  - h. Outdoor picnic/ visiting a zoo/ countryside
  - i. Adventure activities like hiking, camping, trekking
  - j. Etc.
2. Write down a rough sum of money and amount of time consumed by these leisure activities.

## Test result

If the sum of time and money spent on the activities described in PART ONE of the test is greater... then you are in all probability an unknowing victim of DOXA.

SO WHAT THE HELL IS THIS DOXA AFTER ALL?

DOXA IS A GREEK WORD THAT SIGNIFIES AN AMNESIAC STATE OF BEING, BROUGHT ABOUT BY AN EXCESSIVE DEPENDENCE ON, OR OVER-INDULGENCE IN  
**POPULAR OPINION/TASTE**

1. IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY DOXA IS EASILY MANIFEST VIA **EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE** IN MEDIA, TELEVISION, INTERNET, PROPAGANDA ETC.
2. IT OFTEN LEADS TO **MASS AMNESIA, OBSESSION, AND MANIC PERSUASION** OF TRENDS, FASHION, POP CULTURE E.G. HOLLYWOOD/ BOLLYWOOD/ TOLLYWOOD ETC.
3. DOXA OFTEN LANDS ITS VICTIM IN THE ENSLAVEMENT OF WHAT'S KNOWN AS **IDOLA TRIBUS** (IDOLS OF THE TRIBE) - IN SIMPLE TERMS, IT MEANS - **MEANINGLESS IDOLATRY WORSHIP** OF CELEBRITIES, MOVIE STARS, POP STARS ETC.
4. WIDESPREAD IDOLA TRIBUS IS OFTEN CONSIDERED **THE CLASSIC SYMPTOM OF A CAPITALIST SOCIETY** THAT AILS FROM MORAL DECAY AND AN UNHEALTHY APATHY TO ETHICS



# KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

## Personal Popular

Opinion/Taste  
is often based on:

Culture	Media & Entertainment
History	Trends
Arts	Propaganda
Tradition	Pop Culture
Community	Industry



## SECTION THREE

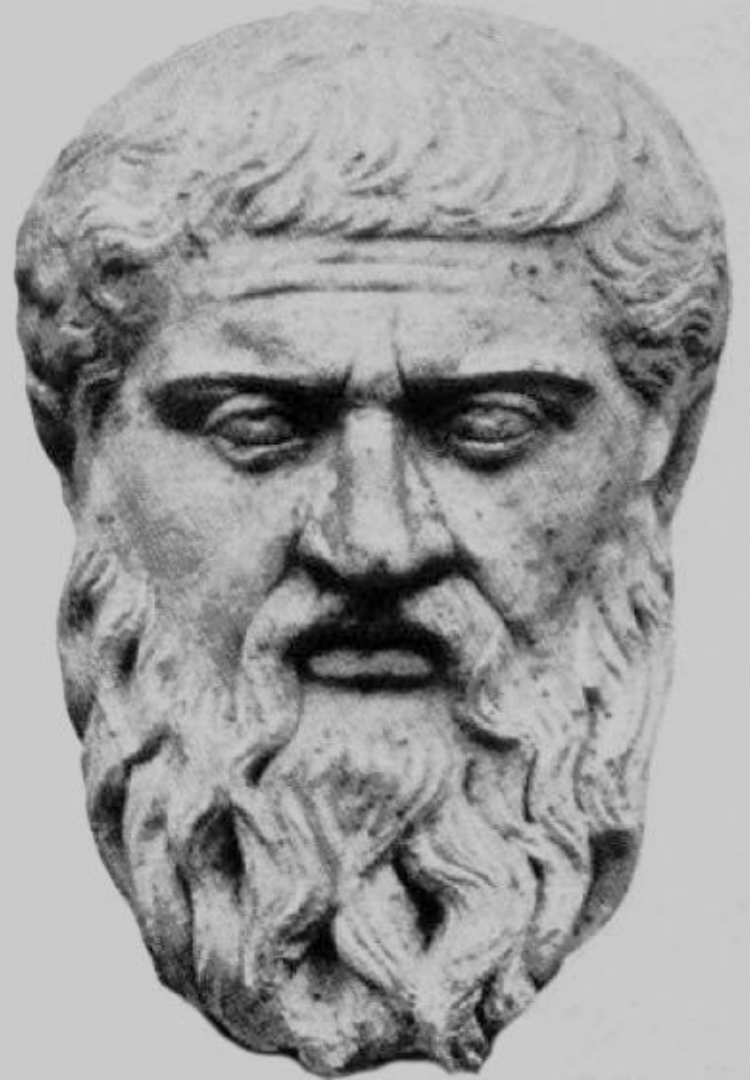
# Philosophy

Some philosophical contexts that could be very useful for students of heritage.

# PLATO

Greek Philosopher (428-7 to 348-7 B.C.E. approx)

He wanted to help people achieve a perfect state of EUDAIMONIA (or fulfilment) and not merely be victims of DOXA (or popular opinion/ taste)



# Ευδαιμονία

**EUDAIMONIA = FULFILMENT**

HAPPINESS | LOVE | PARTNERSHIP | BELONGING | FAMILY  
PEACE | COEXISTENCE | TOLERANCE | SUFFICIENCY

How is his utopian vision of Eudaimonia relevant today? In contemporary society we constantly indulge in *doxa* or popular entertainment to fulfil our need to feel happy. Plato rather vehemently argues that true fulfilment is only possible with enrichment of one's self:

1. **Think More**

- think for yourself, don't let popular opinion sway you

2. **Let your lover\* change you**

- don't impose yourself on any other, allow yourself to experience change

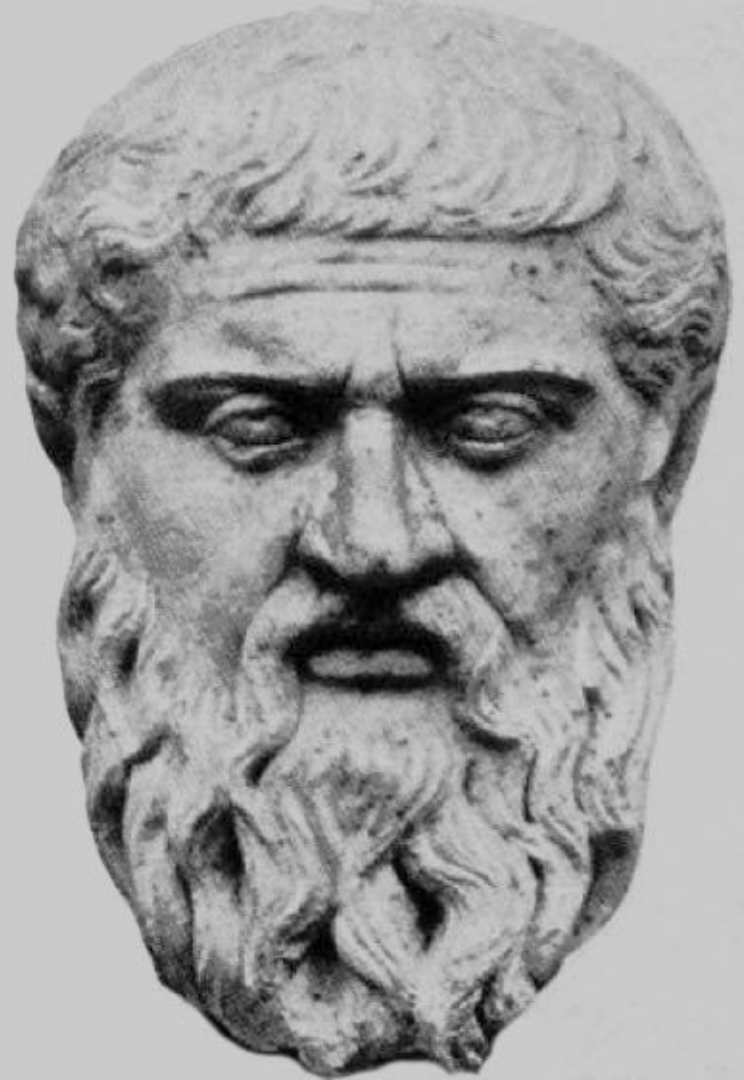
\*Lover need not be human in this case, it can also be taken as a metaphor of your source of joy e.g. hobbies, pastimes, music, theatre, literature, arts etc. that you love to spend time on.

3. **Decode the message of beauty**

- beautiful things whisper subliminal truths

4. **Reform Society**

- Always think how you can help in improving the lives of others

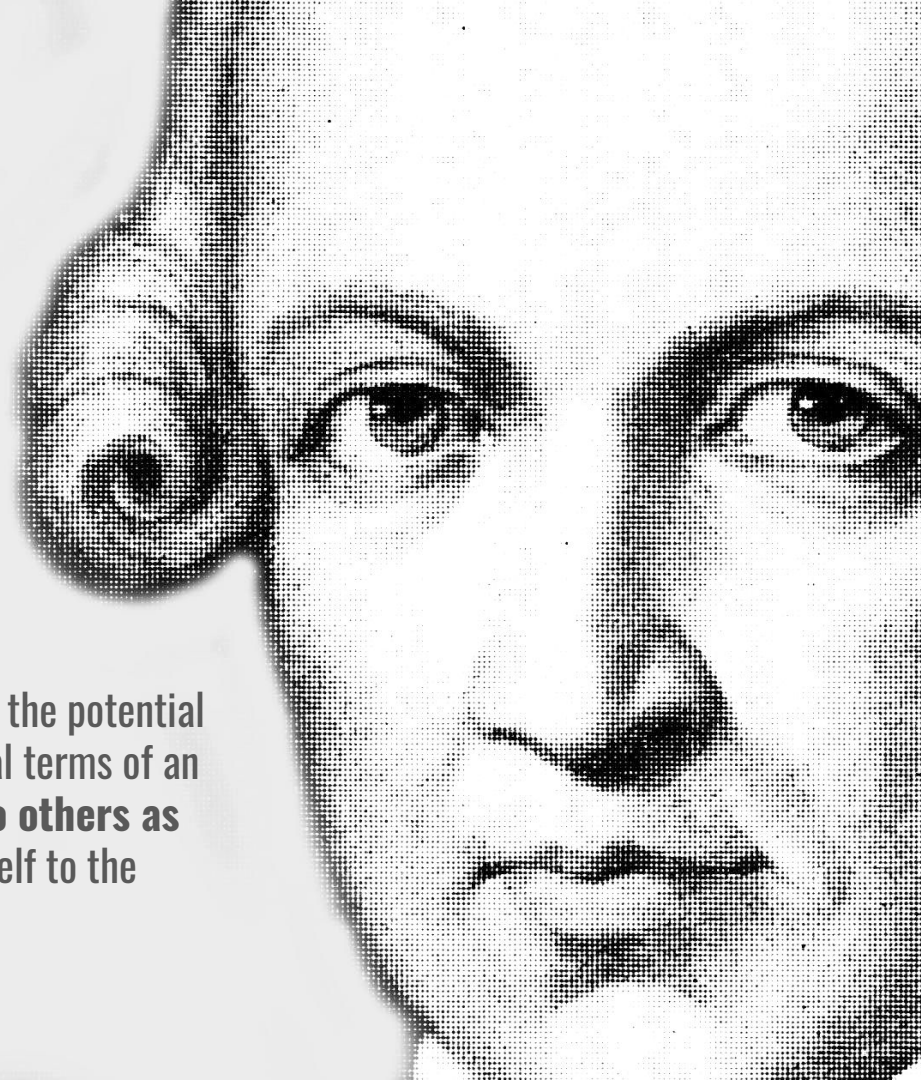


# IMMANUEL KANT

German Philosopher  
(22 April 1724 – 12 February 1804)

## Categorical Imperative

Act only by that maxim that which you would believe has the potential to become a universal law. It is a reinstatement in critical terms of an idea that exists in most religions and moralities: **do unto others as you would have them do unto you**. This also lends itself to the Marxist notion of the *greater good* (or common good).



In the world of Arts Administration & Management the categorical imperative is often established as the starting point for any project manager/ curator/ program director or exhibition designer. Since most arts projects rely either on public funding or governmental patronage, accountability is the most important principle to follow in order to ensure that there is no misuse of funds; and that public interest is at all times the primary concern of the managers. Since most art projects are intangible assets of society, its benefit to the public is therefore considered as the intangible return on investment (one that is far greater than any monetary value or market driven interest rate). In public facing art projects the fulfilment of the categorical imperative is considered the primary marker of its success (not monetary returns, and neither popularity nor critical appreciations/reviews).



# Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

German Philosopher  
(August 27, 1770 – November 14, 1831)

## Phenomenology of the Spirit

1. Important parts of us can be found in history. History is not primitive.
2. Eras are repositories of particular kinds of wisdom.
3. We need to go back in time to find what is missing today.





## Hegel is rather important to the field of heritage today:

- He defines the role of a historian as someone who rescues from the forgotten past the knowledge that is missing in today's modern society.
- Hegel also insists that it is imperative to learn from the ideas that we dislike, e.g. we all know the dangers of nationalism, but by the very knowing of the dangers, we can filter out its advantages.
- He explains that progress is never smooth and therefore invested heavily in the realms of trial and error. In Arts Administration this is vital as fundraising is considered the main deliverable and enabler of success - and therefore arts management is heavily invested in sustained trial and error for acquiring patronage, with the view that only through such means the categorical imperative will be achieved and upheld.

**The Dialectic**, also known as the dialectical method, is a discourse between two or more people holding different or contrasting points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments.

- Dialectic is synonymous with debate, but it differs in one vital way: while in a debate, the debater may use emotional content and, or rhetoric, in dialectics there is no space for emotional investment, and a resolution can only be found through rational thought i.e. reasoning, analyses and logic.

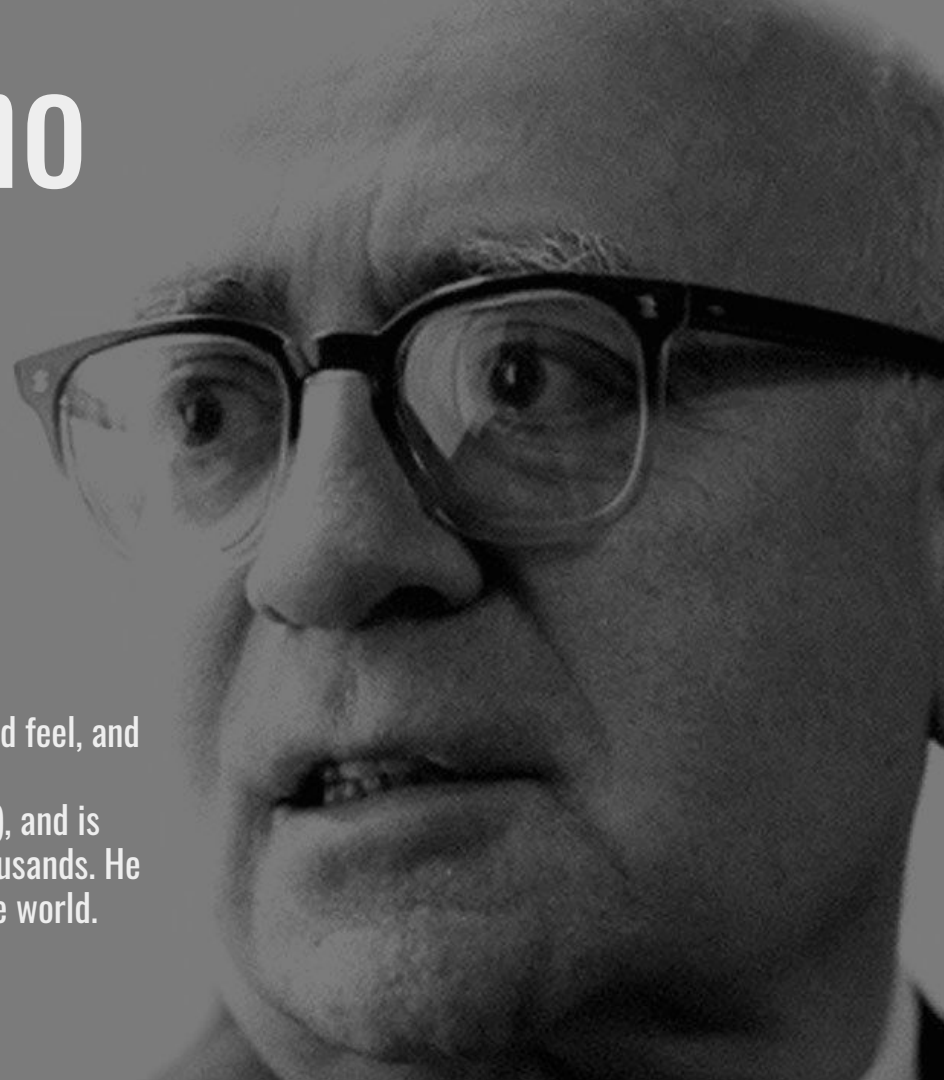


# Theodore Adorno

German Philosopher & Sociologist  
(September 11, 1903 – August 6, 1969)

## The Culture Industry

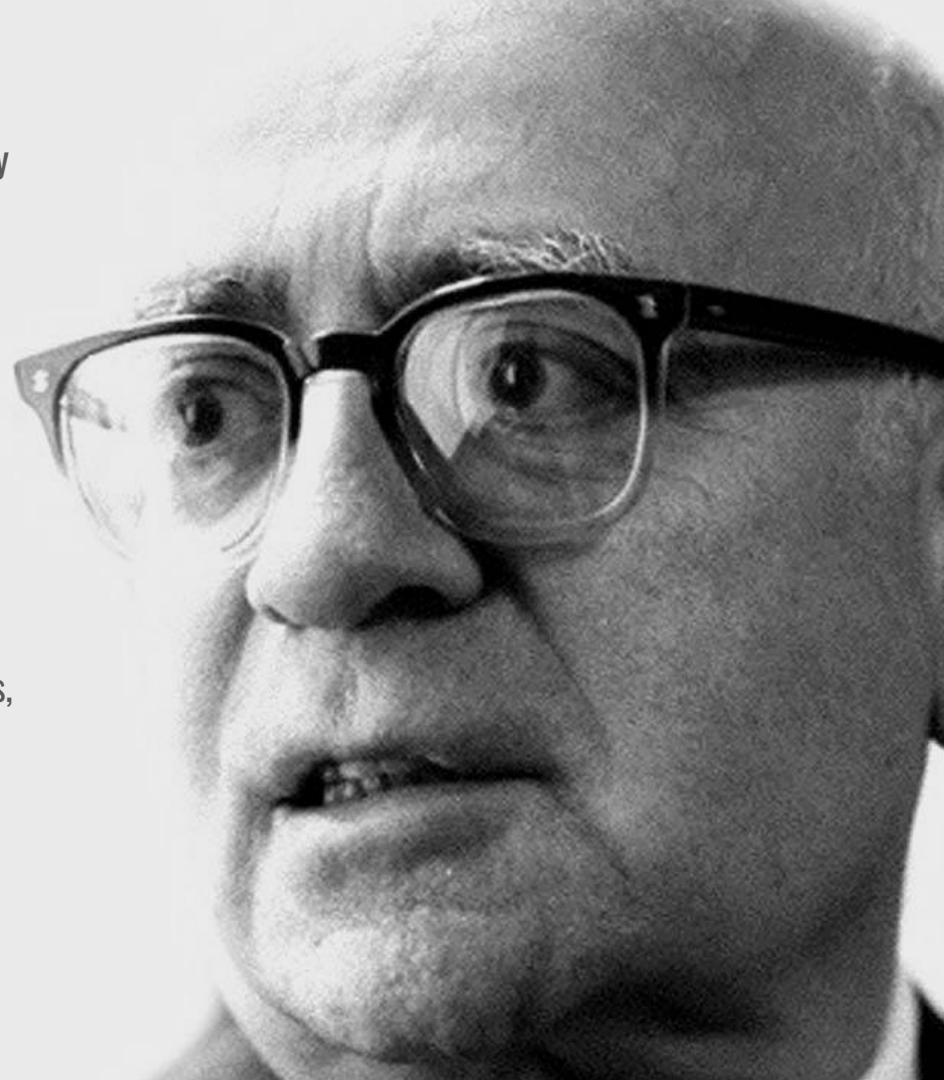
He studied how the working classes of developed nations think and feel, and concluded that *the culture industry* is in fact a deeply malevolent entertainment machine that leads to kind of mass hypnosis (doxa), and is largely responsible for desensitization and disenchantment of thousands. He even accused Walt Disney of being the most dangerous man in the world.



Adorno pointed out some essential facts about modern society :

1. Doxa eventually always becomes toxic, and takes you away from the very things that you were looking for through it.
2. Capitalists doesn't sell what we need, but what in their view we ought to need, it imposes fantastical needs upon us and thereby enslaves us to manufactured convention.
3. There are proto-fascists all around, who play out the hypnosis of doxa in real life, and exercise a disguised fascism on others e.g. you have a cheap car because you are not half as good as your brother who has a rolls royce.

He recognised that the primary obstacles to progress are psychological and not just political or economic. Racism, homophobia, apathy, greed, excesses etc. stem from immaturities, and so it is the task of modern society to identify them and help clearing out immaturities to thereby enable true progress.



# Edward Said

Palestinian-American Writer & Cultural Critic  
(1 November 1935 – 25 September 2003)

## Orientalism

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India, or Egypt, in the later nineteenth century, took an interest in those countries, which was never far from their status, in his mind, as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact — and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism.

— Introduction, *Orientalism*



# Eurocentricism

In his book *Orientalism* (1978) Said unleashes a scathing attack on Eurocentrism as the source of the false cultural representations with which the Western world perceives The East; through the lens of the European cannon. He proposes the existence of a 'subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Eastern peoples and their culture'. This, he argues, stems from the West's long tradition of false, romanticization of Asia, in general, and the Middle East, in particular. He points out that representations have served, and continue to serve, as implicit justifications for the colonial and imperial ambitions of the European powers and of the U.S.



# Kintsugi 金継ぎ

Golden joinery

KIN = gold | TSUGI = joining

Kintsugi is the art of repairing a broken object with gold - with the view that the flaws themselves are a mark of eternal beauty, and repairing it is an act of reconciliation with the ravages of time. In Japanese philosophy, this concept is especially operational under the zen ideal of Wabi Sabi; wherein more appreciation is often deserved by old, broken, rustic, modest, imperfect or frugal artefacts; than by new and polished objects. It is believed that once something suffers damage only then it is of elemental and eternal value.

Today, Kintsugi is considered a fundamental philosophical construct that lends its relevance to the fields of heritage preservation, conservation, archeology, museology, archiving and art history.





# Philosophical thinking (exercise)

Finally here's a short philosophical thinking exercise to take away from this session...

We all know him 

... indeed a man who needs no introduction.

## Exercise:

Fill in the blanks - Gandhiji envisioned an independent India that would uphold these three ideals:

1. सत्याग्रह | insistence on truth
2. अहिंसा | non-violence
3. \_\_\_\_\_?



# अपरिग्रह

Non-possessiveness, exercising active selflessness by owning little and giving lots. It is one of the primary virtues in Hinduism and Jainism, a fact which brings us to a critical question that you can take away as a **philosophical thinking exercise**:

Why is it, that the ideal of Aparigraha has been nearly forgotten in modern India; and how much of it can we find in the constant stream of information that our routinely ritual indulgences of DOXA bombard us with?

**धन्यवाद | THANK YOU**