

Deresiewicz lauds the Darwinists for their practical conclusions but says that the need for their arguments only shows what a terrible pass the humanities have come to. Worse yet, he says, the Darwinists have a research program, and “few things in the academy are more powerful than that.” Some of them talk of putting readers in MRI machines to test their responses while studying, say, the *Iliad*. Or they suggest taking salivary swabs to provide “hormonal indicators of emotions experienced” during the reading of *Hamlet*. Deresiewicz writes that such schemes seem straight out of *Gulliver’s Travels*, in which one sage endeavored to extract sunbeams from cucumbers.

Evolutionary psychologists claim that “the human mind evolved in the Pleistocene, the 1.6 million years during which *Homo sapiens* emerged on the African savanna,” Deresiewicz writes. But the problem with this claim is that it is based entirely on analogy and deduction. Modern primates and hunter-gatherers act in certain ways, and their ancestors to the 50,000th generation might have acted exactly the same way. Or maybe not. Deresiewicz points out that nobody knows what the Pleistocene environment looked like, how our Pleistocene ancestors lived, or even if, perhaps, “our psychology may not be the product of the Pleistocene at all but of the 10,000 years since the emer-

gence of civilization.”

In other words, there is no proof that any of the evolutionary deductions are true. Even if they are, evolutionary psychology is a theory about what human beings have in common. What literary critics want to know goes beyond whether literature is a good thing. They seek to describe how great works differ from one another, and what makes them great. Worthwhile commentary on literature will always be personal, and it will never be definitive or universally valid. It will never satisfy demands for marketable skills, or produce a generation of technologists. It will merely help humans understand, Deresiewicz says, “who we are, where we came from, and where we’re going.”

OTHER NATIONS

Europe’s Envelope Economy

THE SOURCE: “The Hidden Economy in East-Central Europe: Lessons From a Ten-Nation Survey” by Colin C. Williams, in *Problems of Post-Communism*, July–Aug. 2009.

ASK A SPECIALIST ABOUT THE importance of the underground economy in Eastern and Central Europe during the Soviet period, and your terminology is likely to be corrected: Underground activity *was* the economy. A new study of 10 formerly Soviet-dominated states that have joined the European Union reveals that the EU is a long way from wiping

this form of commerce out.

One of every five workers in Eastern and Central Europe labors off the books or receives under-the-table supplemental payments, writes Colin C. Williams, a public policy professor at the University of Sheffield, in England. The prevalence of undeclared or underdeclared employment—off the books for tax, social security, or labor law purposes—ranges from 35 percent of randomly selected residents over the age of 15 in Romania to eight percent in Slovenia.

While shadow employment is

hardly unknown in any country, Eastern Europe has developed its own special version—“envelope” work. In a Eurobarometer survey, 10 percent of 5,084 workers with formal jobs reported receiving “envelope” payments amounting, on average, to 42 percent of their total wages. In Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Poland, such payments amount to about half of the wages of people with formal jobs. In Romania, the figure is 70 percent, according to an extensive survey conducted in 2007. Envelope wages in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Estonia add up to only about a quarter of compensation and are used mostly to pay for overtime or extra work. Manual workers in these formerly communist states receive about 41 percent of their gross pay as envelope wages.

For managers, the figure is 47 percent.

The hidden economy can no longer be ignored or dismissed, Williams says. It creates unfair competition for businesses that follow the law, and also impedes fuller employment and the creation of better jobs. But scholars are barking up the wrong tree when they focus on work that is completely off the books. The more common practice is the envelope of cash slipped to an officially low-wage employee. Up to now, European economic policymakers have been able to dismiss the envelope economy as anecdotal and exaggerated. No more. In Eastern and Central Europe, it's a way of life for eight million people.

OTHER NATIONS

The Graduate Fixer

THE SOURCE: "Fixing Futures: Educated Unemployment Through a North Indian Lens" by Craig Jeffrey, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Jan. 2009.

BEHIND THE IMAGE OF A NEW India populated by a rising middle class of tech-savvy computer specialists and well-educated entrepreneurs lies a grim reality common throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America: legions of educated unemployed young people.

Thousands of youths for whom higher education once would have been out of reach are finding, when they graduate, that professional jobs have not increased remotely in proportion to the number of candidates for them. The economic changes

that opened up manufacturing and services have typically failed to generate permanent white-collar jobs, creating a "vast problem," writes Craig Jeffrey, a geographer at the University of Washington. Uttar Pradesh, whose 190 million people make it India's most populous state, is awash in young men (and women, whose entry into the work force is also blocked by other factors) unable to get the jobs, often with the government, that they and their parents expected. So they study and wait.

The plight of the Jats, a traditionally lower-middle-class farming caste, is a case study in stifled upward mobility. The Jats have amassed land and wealth since the 1960s by taking advantage of the green revolution's high-yield seeds, the greater availability of subsidized fertilizers and pesticides, and improved irrigation. Many are able to finance extensive college training for their children. But with high-status Hindus winning most of the salaried jobs and increasingly well-organized Dalits (formerly known as "untouchables") winning government positions under India's exten-

sive affirmative action system, the Jats are being squeezed out.

Some studies of India and other countries have raised hopes that unemployed young men would use their skills and free time to advocate on behalf of the poor, acting almost as professional mediators. Jeffrey offers a counter-vision: lower-middle-class unemployed men, sometimes in cahoots with government officials, using their education and leisure to aggressively defend their privileges against even poorer unemployed people.

Enter the fixer. As India's economic reforms have cut back on agricultural and educational subsidies, a vast gulf has opened up in Uttar Pradesh between those who receive degrees from a minuscule upper stratum of internationally acclaimed educational institutions and graduates of poorly funded colleges catering to the majority of students, including the Jats.

After getting a degree from an institution characterized by infrequent and disorganized classes, few facilities, and almost no extracurricular activities, Jats who can't find



At a Hyderabad employment fair in February, job seekers tussle over application forms.