

A STUDY IN TAMIL BIOGRAPHIES THAMOTHARAMPILLAI AND NAVALAR

S. Ratnajeewan H. Hoole

The purpose of this article is to point out three general weaknesses in biographies by Tamils of Tamils and to call for better scholarship. The three weaknesses have to do with a tendency to i) boast of the subject, ii) make claims to greatness based on caste and iii) allow religio-nationalism to cloud the biographers' judgment. In particular, we shall take up for examination biographies of C.W. Thamotharampillai, while making occasional references to biographies of Navalar.² Thamotharampillai and Navalar are chosen because, first, much has been written about them of a propagandist nature that is totally inaccurate and needs urgently to be set right because it is taught to school children, and, secondly, this writer has a special interest in them.³

Before delving into the three characteristic weaknesses of Tamil biographies, we will briefly review the life of Cirupitty Wyravanathar Thamotharampillai, so that, as Karalasingham says, younger Ceylonese Tamils may know of their heritage and the contributions this man from Jaffna has made to the language. Indeed, it may be said that Thamotharampillai, born on 12 September, 1832, has done more for the Tamil language than any other person from Sri Lanka and that to this date, nearly a century after his death in 1901, his name commands immediate recognition among Tamil scholars everywhere. His contributions — mainly in ferreting out lost Tamil manuscripts through thorough searches including advertisements in the press, comparing the manuscripts found, and publishing them with a commentary — were extensive. The most significant among these was his publication of the *Tholkapiyam-Chollathiharam* and *Porulathiharam* on Tamil grammar, the oldest Tamil book in existence. Others include the *Sangam* works such as *Kaliththohai* and *Ahanahnooru*. It is a measure of tiny Jaffna's role on the intellectual landscape of the time that the first two graduates of Madras University — of whom Thamotharampillai was one — were both from Jaffna and products of Batticotta Seminary, now Jaffna College.

Thamotharampillai's career began as a teacher in the service of the Christian missions. Later he became the editor of a church daily in India, and subsequently moved to the Tamil Department at Presidency College, Madras, as its head. He then left the Presidency College to become the Accountant General of the Madras Treasury and finally culminating his career as a Judge. In the latter capacity, Thamotharampillai used his large earnings to continue the publication of ancient Tamil manuscripts⁴

Thamotharampillai lived in a period in which Hinduism and Christianity were dynamically interacting, and Hinduism was redefining itself in the face of Christian missionary challenge, first in direct response, and then under Ram Mohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj. It is a period that, in terms of present day Tamil identity, has much to teach us. And studies of great lives of that period such as Thamotharampillai's, are bound to be instructive because we have more information of them than of others.

Thamotharampillai, or Charles Winslow Kingsbury, the eldest son of Cyrus Kingsbury who was a first generation Christian, started studying Tamil under his father Cyrus. After finishing his college education in 1852 at Batticotta Seminary, Thamotharampillai taught for some years under the mission and then proceeded to Madras to head a mission-run daily. There he embraced Saivism and, wishing to keep his initials C.W., took on the name Cirupitty Wyravanathar Thamotharampillai. The reason for his conversion to Hinduism had to do with his caste-consciousness⁵. One biographer says that his Christian background subjected him to teasing⁶. Caste-conscious Jaffna Christians who went to India felt some discomfort at being presumed to be "low-caste", and assumed traditional Tamil or Hindu names, particularly with the suffix "pillai" and even converted themselves to Hinduism. His choice of the new name, and his close association with Navalar (who addressed his "reforms" to Vellalals and described other people as "low-caste"⁷) tell us that Thamotharampillai was also caste-conscious.

Having said this about Thamotharampillai, we will now turn to the three general weaknesses of Tamil biographers. The first shortcoming concerns the unfortunate Tamil/Indian proclivity only to praise the subject of the biography. After all, it has been the Tamil/Indian tradition to mention only the good side of the subject, even to the point of exaggeration. This we see in old poetry where the poet's patron, the king, who is usually described as being descended from the Moon or the Sun, and such praises go on ad nauseam. It is because of this tendency that few of us know that Gandhi held forth in his newspaper, *The Harijan*, comparing the intelligence of the lower-castes with that of a cow⁸. Similarly, we find Ramanathan's biographer waffling through the circumstances under which Ramanathan and Coomarasamy had to quit Presidency College following some scandals. In the same vein, all of Thamotharampillai's biographers shower praises on him for his intellectual attainments, but no critical appraisal of Thamotharampillai the man is in evidence.

After all, one of the enjoyable points of reading a biography is to see that even great men are in many ways very ordinary persons like ourselves. In this, Thamothersampillai was no exception. His daughter who had stayed behind in Vaddukodai with his Christian brother Appukutti Kingsbury had — on her own wishes — a Christian marriage arranged for her. Thamothersampillai had suddenly turned up from India and the daughter, fearing that the father would put a stop to her marriage, ran out through a hole in the back fence and eloped with her fiancée on a bullock-cart. Missing the daughter, Thamothersampillai started going through each room of the house looking for her, until he came to one room where his niece Sundaram Hemphil was breast-feeding her child. He asked Sundaram where the daughter was, and getting the evasive reply that she must be somewhere about, he promptly assaulted her even as she was breast-feeding. Again, when The Rev. Canon S.S. Somasundaram, a Christian convert from a family closely associated with Thamothersampillai, rejected his ancestral privileges at Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple and got married to Ponnammah Hemphil, Thamothersampillai's grand-niece, Thamothersampillai was doubly angry with Somasundaram for rejecting Hinduism as well as for marrying Ponnammah. Later when Somasundaram proceeded to Calcutta for his B.A., he was sent to his family friend and new in-law, Thamothersampillai's house in Madras to stop-over. Unknown to Somasundaram, the railway to Calcutta from Madras had just begun to run the previous week, but it is said that Thamothersampillai hardly spoke to Somasundaram on that visit and intentionally and pettily loaded him on the ship to Calcutta which was considered an arduous and tiring way of getting there. Somasundaram was deeply upset when he got to Calcutta and found out about the availability of the train.

But Thamothersampillai also had his kind side. This side of his personality reveals itself in his relationship with his son, Francis Kingsbury, Professor of Tamil at University College, Colombo (now the University of Colombo) and an intellectual giant in his own right, having produced numerous books in Tamil as well as English. Stories abound of Thamothersampillai's relationship with Francis; both were stubborn men who did not speak to each other since Francis's refusal to officiate at Hindu rites at his mother's death. When Thamothersampillai had Francis' frontal hair shaved in the Hindu fashion, Francis had his entire head shaved. It is in this relationship that we see Thamothersampillai's kind side. Although he had objections to Francis (something Karalasingham refuses to admit) he felt a connection to Francis' daughter (Catherine Kingsbury) and had given a pair of bangles to her at birth with strict injunctions to Francis' wife that she should not divulge that it was he who had made the gift — he feared that the bangles would be returned by the proud son. According to another story, when Francis became a Christian and walked out of his father's house at 21 and started living with William Miller, a missionary in India, Thamothersampillai, to protect the "family honour", had apparently sent Miller a monthly sum lest it be said that his son was living on charity. Francis was not told because it was assumed that he would walk out of Miller's house too rather than accept his father's largesse.

Perhaps due to the same Tamil tendency to exaggerate the subject's greatness, Mr. Karalasingham also errs in saying that Thamothersampillai looked after his brother's education, found them jobs, and got them married. Appukutti was educated by the mission and employed by the mission as what the Americans called Native Professor of Mathematics at the Batticotta Seminary. Thamothersampillai did try (not always successfully) to arrange marriages for the others, but always to Hindus and against the family's wishes.

The second drawback in Tamil biographies arises from the fact they are of Vellalaha by Vellalaha, indicated in the devious way in which caste is introduced. According to Karalasingham, "Thamothersampillai comes from an illustrious farming stock". Another typical ploy used by biographers is the phrase "He was from an orthodox family". What is meant is obvious. It is the phraseology of almost every upper-class Tamil for whom caste is important, but whose Western veneer (which must be maintained at any cost as the sign of class status) prevents him from being direct⁹. But in this case, it is ironic in that the Vellalaha heritage was rejected by Thamothersampillai's father, Cyrus Kingsbury, and probably also the Levins family that Thamothersampillai married twice into. In the early years of Christianity in Sri Lanka, the Christians were militantly against caste. For example, The Rt. Rev. Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta whose diocese included Ceylon, says in his pastoral letter of 5th July 1833: "The distinction of castes, then must be abandoned decidedly, immediately, finally; those who profess to belong to Christ must give this proof of their having really 'put off the old man', and having 'put on the new man' in Christ Jesus". This policy on caste was enforced throughout his bishopric¹⁰. Because Christian wives were considered important in upholding Christianity in the newly Christian homes¹¹, the mission boarding schools for girls were considered important in supplying Christian brides. We know from records that the earliest inmates at Uduvil were from the lower castes and poor (some were from such poor homes that they had been handed over to the missions by their parents¹²). Others, from descriptions in old records, were clearly of Koviah and Pandaram origin¹³. That the students were, in terms of caste, a mixed bag is clear from i) objections of Vellalaha parents to their children eating with the other children in the boarding, and ii) the school's having to look after the student until a Christian marriage could be arranged for her. It was only in 1826 that the America-Ceylon Mission took the controversial decision "that they would admit only girls of good caste who have some property; such girls as would make suitable companions for the boys' in Batticotta¹⁴". Cyrus Kingsbury, like many early Christians of his time, took his bride from the Uduvil boarding during this time of transition. While we know nothing of Mrs. Cyrus Kingsbury's caste background, it is significant that some of the early non-Vellalaha inmates of the boarding schools have disappeared into the so-called Christian Vellalaha community, and indeed, a good number through reconversion into Hindu families "of illustrious farming stock" that need not be named here. The caste antecedents of Jaffna Christians are therefore subject to surmise and conjecture. But we have every reason to believe that Cyrus Kingsbury, like other Christians of his day, militantly rejected caste.

Indeed therefore, it is the Kingsbury heritage to find greater dignity in being an out-caste (asangha) untouchable Christian than in the pitiable spectacle of a Sudra Vellalah¹⁵ arguing for his status in relation to others. Unlike what his biographers claim, an illustrious agricultural heritage is not the Kingsbury heritage, but rather one that Cyrus's son, C.W. Thamothersampillai chased after for himself.

The third weakness of Tamil biographers is to allow their religio-national sensibilities to cloud their academic judgment. For instance, few of Arumuga Navalar's biographers, because of his position as a Saivite leader, mention his temper tantrums in assaulting Vaishnavites during debates his Vellalah bigotry in putting down those considered lower and so on. We may note that one biography, commended in a foreword by no less an authority than the late Professor Kanapathippillai, tells us¹⁶ that the Bible was translated by Navalar (whereas it really involved the revision of a long-existing translation by a team of scholars including the Rev. Pandit Elijah Hoole, a team of which Navalar was but one under the Rev. Percival¹⁷) and that this translation, after 50 years of use only in Jaffna, fell into disuse because it was deemed to lack the "excellences" of the Indian translation¹⁸. Another biographer constantly refers to the Bible written by Navalar¹⁹. Likewise even men of distinction like justice H.W. Tambiah²⁰ and Professor S. Pathmanathan²¹ appear to allow their nationalism to cloud their objectivity in claiming Navalar to be the father of modern Tamil prose (whereas prose writing was first used on a large and consistent scale earlier by the Christian missions in their translations of the Bible, tracts and stories²²). Even Professor K. Kailasapathy, who places Navalar among the great social reformers of the nineteenth century for his work in famine relief in 1876,²³ appears to suffer from the same blind-spot when dealing with issues of religio-nationalism; for he seems not to be able to see that Navalar was only copying what the missions were already doing through their hospitals and work with the poor, and even that rather selectively; for Navalar distributed food only to Vellalahs and certainly not to those whom he called low-castes during the famine and teaches us in his 4th Palar that Cattiram (gifts and alms) is to be given only to Brahmins and poor Vellalahs²⁴.

This tendency becomes obnoxious when Thamothersampillai's Christian heritage is brazenly ignored or played down, and all his biographers consistently ignore a major period of his life when he worked for the Church for evangelisation in Kopay at a Teacher's Training College. Similarly Francis is called Alahasundaram by all of Thamothersampillai's biographers, a name that was only used at home and never used by Francis in his numerous publications where he consistently went as Francis Kingsbury. Mr. Karalasingham, after using the name Alahasundaram that no one would recognize, at least concedes at the end of the book in a note that Alahasundaram is no other than Francis Kingsbury²⁵. Other biographers simply refer to Francis as Alahasundaram and say no more about him. One would think that it is a simple courtesy to use the name a man chose for himself-not to do so would be like insisting on calling Thamothersampillai "Charles Kingsbury". Similarly, Thamothersampillai's first two wives and the wives of his three brothers, the five Levins sisters, are referred to by the

unrecognizable name of Kalingarayar by Karalasingham; again a case of caste legitimization and trying to hide their Christian roots.

Could this playing down of the Christian connection be because it is felt that any hint of his Christian upbringing would, in the minds of the biographers, diminish his Tamilness? This thinking has its roots in the idea expressed by Professor Pathmanathan that "the Hindu tradition, along with the Tamil language, forms the basis of Tamil identity"²⁶ as though if Thamothersampillai had been a Christian, he could not have been a Tamil. If this idea is to be believed, even Valluvar, most probably a Jain, would not be a Tamil! This same thinking appears to be echoed by justice H.W. Tambiah, the Vice Chairman of the Navalar Commemoration Society, when he says that without Navalar, what he calls the Tamil "Race" would have been destroyed, as though conversion to Christianity meant loss of Tamilness. The Tamils have moved from animism to Buddhism and Jainism to an aggressively proselytising Saivism that demanded conversion on pain of death and confiscation of property²⁷ and now to a more sober, Christianised, mono-theistic, monogamist and egalitarian Saivism that is even a little Victorian. Some Tamils are Christians or Muslims. The Tamil language has been Sanskritised, has absorbed a little Portuguese and Dutch, and is now getting thoroughly Anglicised especially in speech²⁸. But surely, the Tamils do survive as Tamils. Indeed, if at all the "Tamil Race" needed saving, one cannot help asking who saved it. Navalar who worked only for the Vellalahs and whose schools until recent years refused admission to those from the depressed castes? Or the missions that i) educated those like Navalar and Thamothersampillai, ii) discovered our literature for us, iii) worked for the abolition of slavery and undermined the caste-system, iv) opened the schools to the depressed, especially along the coastal belt, and advanced female education (let alone male education) from the abysmal state it was in when they arrived²⁹. The Vellalah answer to this is to be expected; but is it warranted by evidence? Perhaps it is time for Tamil scholarship to be less Vellalah-centric and examine why any Tamil of that period with some achievement was invariably a product of the missions. Christian missionaries have at times been at odds with the colonial administration and have worked for the people at great risk to their own lives. It is perhaps time now, almost half a century after independence, to take a fresh and balanced look at their contributions.

Thus we see that the Tamils in writing biographies have a proclivity to inexactness and fuzziness, with a view to self-glorification, self-adulation, and self-congratulation. It is sad that even the best minds among us who have been trained, examined, and certified to be logical in our thinking, cannot overcome this tendency to self-promotion at the expense of truth. One wonders whether this has its roots in our culture that makes status and one-upmanship such an important thing in life - every Jaffna family, it is said, tries by every means to claim a higher caste status, so much so that the proportion of Vellalahs has risen from 30% in 1790 when the Dutch conducted a census to roughly 50% today³⁰, and an unbelievable number of families claim to be descended from

the Aryachakaravarthis of Nallur! These figures tie in with how the early so-called low-caste Christians disappeared into Vellalah Christian and indeed Hindu Vellalah families, and demonstrate that even Saivite claims to Vellalah status are as dubious and spurious as Christian ones³¹.

Although one would like to distance oneself from Lord Macaulay, one cannot but be reminded in this context of his now famous minute about our "false history, false astronomy, false metaphysics," during the great debate about whether Indians should be educated in English or in the vernacular. Do we then dismiss Macaulay as a racist and go on as we are, or, do we reassess and correct ourselves so as to prove Macaulay wrong? ■

Notes

1. S. Karalasingham, *Life of Rau Bahadur C.W. Thamotharampillai*, Madras, 1983. Pulavaraham, Chunnakam, 1974. Sri la Sri Arumuganaval Sabai, Colombo 7, 1979. K. Muthukumaraswami Pillai, C.Y. Thamotherampillai. 'Kavithirathu'. Manorani Shanmugadas "Navalarum Thamotherampillaiyum" in 'Navalar Noottrandu Malar' (Naralar Centuary Souvenir).

2. Varathar, Naralar Sri la Sri Arumuganaval Sabai, Colombo 7, 1979. 'Navalar Noottrandu Malar' (Naralar Centenary Souvenir) Sri la Sri Arumuganaval Sabai, Colombo 7, 1979.

3. Thamotharampillai belonged to the Kingsbury family founded by this writer's great-great-grandfather Cyrus Kingsbury, Thamotharampillai's father.

4. M. Vythilingam, *The Life of Sri Ponnambalam Ramanathan*, Colombo, 1971, pp.82-3.

5. Source: Thamotharampillai's great-grand-daughter, Lila Solomon (nee Kadirgamar) of Australia.

6. Manorani Shanmugadas *ibid.* p. 131.

7. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "Arumuka Navalar: Religious Reformer or National Leader of Eelam", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.26, No.2, 2989.

8. The Harijan, Dec.19,1936: The context was the evangelization of the lower castes by the Rev.Dr.Mott. See Duncan Forrester, *Caste and Christianity*, Curzon Press, London, 1980. p.179: Gandhi's attitude was perhaps betrayed when he advised a missionary to pray for the Harijans but not to try to convert them because they did not have [quoting Gandhi from the Harijan] "the mind and intelligence to understand what you talked...would you preach the Gospel to a cow?"

9. It is widely known but rarely admitted within the Tamil community that even those claiming caste to be a later aberration in a once pure religion, would quietly set about

dissuading their relatives from marrying outside their caste and carefully checking caste credentials in arranging marriages. Even the so-called Vellalah Christians do this. A well known example of this pretence to egalitarianism is the late Professor C. Suntheralingam who after involvement in an anti-caste Gandhian youth organisation, according to B. Pfaffenberger, came to be remembered as the "caste fanatic" in physically preventing the so-called low-castes from entering Maviddapuram temple. (*Fourth World Colonialism, Indigenous Minorities And Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka*), Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol.16, No.1, 1984; pp. 18&21.

10. J. Bateman, *The Life of Daniel Wilson*, John Murray, London, 1860. p.438.

11. Schwartz of Travancore/; "The conversion of one woman is of more importance than of six men". Quoted on p.4 of M.H. Harrison, *Uduvil: 1824-1924*, ACM press, Tellippalai, 1925.

12. Sri James Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, London: John Murray, 1850; p. 160. The Rev. Dr. D.T. Niles was one of the few persons to speak with pride in his sermon about the first Niles's wife who was given by her poor mother to a missionary lady. In another case, a girl who sheltered at the mission house during a storm took bread and bananas from the missionary. The parents thereupon felt the girl was polluted and unfit for marriage and asked the missionary to look after her. See p. 118 of Leitch and Leitch, 1890.

13. The koviahs are household cooks ritually equal to the Vellalahs and probably the descendants of Sinhalese agriculturists captured in war. The Pandarms are temple cooks.

14. Harrison, 1925, p.12. The issue of property arose because the girls were married off by the mission with a dowry of 50 Rix Dollars. Note that Church Missionary Society's boarding school for girls at Nallur-later moved to Chundikuli-was not ready until 1842.

15. Except for the Vellalahs themselves, all authorities agree that they are Sudra. For a complete listing of authorities who say the Vellalahs are Sudra, see S.R.H. Hoole, "The Tamils: The Problem of Identity and Religion", *Indian Church History Review*, Vol, xxxvi, no. 2, pp.88-135, 1992.

16. Varathar pp.13-4; this propaganda is widely taught in schools.

17. see testimonials in file No.C.CE. 071/1]12 on The Rev. Fr. Elijah Hoole, Church Missionary Society Archives, University of Birmingham. Also Sri James Emerson Tennent (*Christianity in Ceylon*, London: John Murray, 1850; p.174) makes clear that the Rev. P. Percival, "the best English Tamil scholar in Ceylon" was in charge of and engaged in "a revision of the Tamil Version of the Scriptures".

18. Sabapathy Kulandran, *The Word, Men and Matters*, Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Jaffna, 1987.

19. Saminatha Iyer. U.V. P.62.

20. H.W.Tambiah, p.ii of Note 5.

21. S.Pathmanathan, "The Hindu Society in Sri Lanka: Changed and Changing", in J.R.Carter (Ed.), *Religiousness in Sri Lanka*, Marga Institute, Colombo (n.d.). See p.153

22. The Jesuit Fr. Robert de Nobili (Tatuva Podager Swami, who died in 1656) is regarded as the father of Tamil prose (D.Rajarigam, *The History of Tamil Christian Literature*, The Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1958, p.19)

23. K.Kailasapthy, "The Cultural and Linguistic Consciousness of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka", Punitham Tiruchelvam Memorial Lecture, New Leela Press, Colombo, 1982.p.5.

24. Hellman-Rajanayagam, 1989, p.242 of Note 13.

25. In Karalasingham's embarrassment of writing of negatives, there is only veiled reference to Francis's trial at the Pasumali Church where he was priest, conducted by Dr. Larson, Principal of Bangalore during his tenure as British Army Chaplain in Mesopotamia in the early 1920s as a result of reading German thinkers-that Jesus was a man. It was subsequent to this that he joined the university in Colombo.

26. S.Pathmanathan, (n.d.), p.158 (Note 37)

27. R.C.Majumdar, "Ancient India", Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960; p. 428

28. There appears to be parallels between how the Tamils absorbed Vedic Hinduism and Sanskrit a millennium ago, and what is happening with Christianity and English now. The Christian ideas of monotheism, monogamy and equality among men have a precarious acceptance in Hinduism now and, with English, the Tamils appear to be a similar stage to Sanskrit when the learned Tamils threw in Sanskrit words liberally in their speech to prove a higher status. It remains to be seen if English would in time be as naturalised in Tamil as Sanskrit is.

29. according to be missionary Mr. Meigs, writing in 1816, he could find only 2-3 girls in Jaffna (one in Alavetty, the second

in Udupitty and the third whom he never saw) who could read and write. Parents refused to send a female child to school saying that learning to read "spoiled her modesty, endangered her chastity and rendered her insubordinate to the other sex" [Harrison, 1925 (Note 25);p.4]. Sri James Emerson Tennent (*Christianity in Ceylon*, London: John Murray, 1850; p. 156) tells us that the few who could read were Devadasis (temple prostitutes whose modesty and chastity would not have been of concern to the temple managers) who had been taught to read and write so as to enable them to transcribe temple music. It took long and patient efforts by the missions to have female education accepted.

30. B.Pfaffenburger, "The political Construction of Defensive Nationalism: The 1968 Temple-Entry Crisis in Northern Sri Lanka", *J.Asian Studies*, 49 (1), 1990,p,82,citing Banks, 1960,pp.73-74.

31. No family in Jaffna can deny having mixed caste/race blood. It is an interesting fact that even families that consider themselves high-caste pride themselves in any light complexion and light eyes that may run in the family without thinking of the origin. It is well documented that in Kerala, from where many Jaffna immigrants came (and at least a trace must surely remain in every Jaffna family), the Nambudri Brahmin exercised "The Right of the First Night" (*Jus Primae Noctis*) by taking the Sudra bride home to bed on the wedding night, up to the early years of this century. Here Sudra includes the Vellalabs. Other reasons for light skin among Tamils are the immigrants from Persia and Arabia to Kerala through the centuries as well as Roman settlers in ancient times in Tamil Nadu and Kerala who have disappeared into the population. It is noted that in strict Hindu law, anyone of mixed caste is not half this and half that, but untouchable (*asangha*). Those Tamil who are of light skin or light eyes who do not wish to accept this explanation, must look to the Portuguese, Dutch and English. European colonialists did have children through Tamils (Portuguese mixture in an area around Changilithoppu and in some families is visibly evident from the blue and reddish brown eyes). This writer knows of one well-established Saivite family of "impeccable Vellalabs" that has a Dutch ancestor who is carefully hidden away. However, the extent of mixture remains to be investigated. But unfortunately, because of the status implications and because the very families that know will be those least likely to speak out, the subject will remain uninvestigated for some years.

S. Ratnajeevan H. Hoole is a Professor of Engineering and an Adjunct Professor of the Humanities and Social Science at Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, CA 91711.