L. T. HOBHOUSE
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No. 29

International Comprehension in and through Social Science

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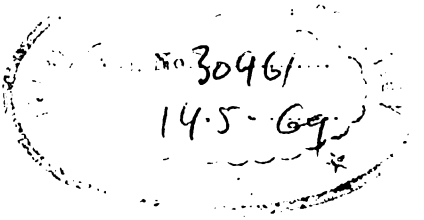

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INTERNATIONAL COMPREHENSION IN AND THROUGH SOCIAL SCIENCE

WHEN I received the invitation to deliver the Hobhouse Memorial Lecture this year, I was torn by conflicting emotions—gratitude for the honour done me and for the opportunity it would give me to return for a moment, in an academic capacity, to these very familiar surroundings, and anxiety as to my ability to find a subject on which I could put together some thoughts that might be worthy of the occasion. After three years as an international civil servant, living in that hectic state of constant rush which seems to be characteristic of international organizations, I obviously cannot offer you a scholarly dissertation or the fruits of original research. So I decided to delve into the experience gained in the course of my work and see if I could unearth something which would be of sufficient interest for the purpose. And when I called to mind the picture of Hobhouse, as I remember him, and also some of his vigorous comments on current affairs, I ventured to believe that he himself would have regarded the work of the organization in which I am now serving, and the lessons to be learned from it about co-operation and communication between people of different cultures, as matters worthy of serious attention. Let me hasten to add that I am not about to deliver a talk on UNESCO and all its works; far from it. I mean only that my theme has been suggested to me by my present occupation and can be illustrated from the same source.

This theme is divided into two parts which, although they represent different levels of approach to the subject, are closely linked. The first approach may be called the professional one, and can be explained as follows. Let us assume that the social sciences, in their various disciplines, are developing systems of concepts, theories, and methods by means of which research carried out by different people in the same field can be objectively assessed, compared, and integrated into a collective body of knowledge. The question then arises whether, in this process, the frontiers between

nations and cultures have any significance. If we boldly cry: 'Social Scientists of the world, unite', are we merely ignoring barriers which effectively keep them apart? Should we concentrate on our task of building systems, convinced that their fundamental universality will ultimately become apparent, or ought we to turn part of our attention to the barriers between nations and cultures and make these barriers themselves the object of scientific study, in order to discover exactly what is their nature and how best they can be overcome?

The second approach is that which the French elegantly term *vulgarisation*, a word which official translators have been known, in an off moment, to transcribe letter by letter into an English text, thereby putting their finger on the very crux of the matter. How can we have *vulgarisation* without vulgarization? It is evident to us all that the pictures which people of one culture form of the cultures of others are pathetically inadequate and often dangerously false. It is also clear that this lack of mutual understanding today breeds a sense of frustration, which degenerates easily into irritation, and that great efforts are being made from many directions to remedy it. Lack of understanding may be due to emotional forces which give rise to prejudice, or to a feeling of insecurity; it may be the result of the passive acceptance of traditional stereotypes, but it is always founded on ignorance. So the question is: can the social sciences, by the use of their own professional methods, increase mutual understanding between cultures? You may think that this is a foolish question, and that the answer is obviously, 'yes'. For the whole purpose of the social sciences is to increase and deepen our knowledge of human society, in its various manifestations, and an increase of knowledge must necessarily increase understanding. But the matter is not so simple. I am speaking about the understanding that may be achieved, not by professional social scientists, but by peoples or, to use a crude but useful phrase, by educated publics. And understanding of this kind will always be built on foundations of ignorance. The educated public can never know all there is to know about a foreign culture. The task of those who set out to improve

mutual understanding at this level is that of conveying the essential truth without teaching all the facts. There are, therefore, two processes involved—first, the accumulation of knowledge and the acquisition of understanding, and secondly, the communication of this understanding to others, who can never be expected to absorb all the knowledge. This second process requires special skills, which may not always be found in social scientists.

Now, nobody can work for long in an international organization today without noticing that the very intensity of the desire, all over the world, to explain one culture to the people of another has a certain tendency to self-frustration. The eagerness to make yourself known and understood to others may lead you to maintain that only somebody who is a product of your culture is qualified to understand and explain it. And this attitude is likely to be most unyielding when the others, by whom you wish to be understood, recently exercised over you a superior power which made them, so you think, contemptuous of your way of life. You begin to regard with suspicion the foreign scholars who specialize in the study of your civilization. But from the other side there then comes the claim that nobody who is not a product of *their* culture can communicate to their educated public knowledge and understanding of *your* culture. The two processes of acquiring knowledge and of communicating knowledge becomes separated by the very barrier they have set out to overcome. If the goal is to be reached, there must be mutual understanding, and mutual confidence, between social scientists of different cultures, in order that the two processes may be harmonized. And in this fact is to be found the link between the two parts of my theme.

If we look back at the events out of which modern sociology has grown (and here I am including social anthropology), we can see what a large part was played, both in the great surveys of human evolution attempted by the founders and in the empirical research that followed or accompanied them, by studies of the civilization of people who were not in a position to answer back, because they were either dead or illiterate. The situation has changed considerably. I do not

know whether the Trobriand Islanders can now read the works of Malinowski. If they can, I expect they feel both flattered and instructed by them.

It is certainly true—and this is to be regretted—that historical material, information about people who have been silenced by death, is less widely and effectively used by sociologists than it used to be. But the most important fact is that anthropologists have increasingly turned their attention to the examination and interpretation of cultures which are both literate and highly sophisticated, while at the same time the methods and techniques of modern sociological research and analysis have been adopted by the scholars of these countries and are rapidly coming into ever more extensive and intensive use in their hands.

Before this happened, we had a situation in which societies differing widely in their culture and structure were being studied and compared by specialists who had all been trained in approximately the same school. The variety of the material was reduced to order by the unity of approach used by the observers. In the earlier anthropological descriptions, it has been said, 'cultures were described in terms of the traditional institutional categories of Western cultures' (12. 2). Gross misunderstandings resulted, which anthropologists, still acting fundamentally in concert, strove to remedy by the application to the problem of new techniques. Professor Lévi-Strauss has stated that the French sociological school, of Durkheim and Mauss, 'have always taken care to substitute, as a starting-point for the survey of native categories of thought, the conscious representations prevailing among the natives themselves for those grown out of the anthropologist's own culture'. But, he continues, though this was an important advance, it was not enough, 'because these authors were not sufficiently aware that native conscious representations, important as they are, may be just as remote from the unconscious reality as any other' (10. 527). So the observer, who is still a foreign visitor, must impose on the material he collects, not the concepts appropriate to his own culture, but the 'model' which in his opinion (and not necessarily in that of the people he is studying) is appropriate to his

material. I am not questioning the truth of this assertion, but only pointing out that it becomes difficult to put it into practice when the people you are studying are able to answer back—both as qualified social scientists, and as political equals. They are quite likely to deny the superiority of the foreigner's model over their own conscious representations. And they construct models of their own which, I am quite certain, deserve to be treated with the greatest respect.

The civilizations of Asia and the Middle East cannot be treated as the passive objects of comparative study by 'Western' scientists. They contain active practitioners of a sociology which they direct mainly, though not exclusively, at themselves. But, while the methods of scientific sociology are spreading outwards from the 'Western' culture in which they originated, we have not yet achieved what Arvid Brodersen calls the 'substantive policy objective of internationalizing the social sciences' (6. 284) to the same extent that we have internationalized the natural sciences. The so-called 'traditional' societies have broken through the crust of their traditional attitudes towards the means by which human society should be studied and by which a deeper understanding of it should be sought, and have begun to apply the methods of modern science to the study of mankind. But tradition is not only a matter of conscious beliefs or intellectual practices which can be changed by an act of will. It is much more deeply rooted than that. And, for some time, the co-existence of a disturbed traditionalism with a still slightly exotic scientism may produce a combination unlike anything to be found in the countries in which the scientific method had its birth. This combination may have its defects. But it can also deepen our understanding of traditional cultures in ways which were not possible before.

Traditionalism is associated with a qualitative analysis, dominated by a religious philosophy, reinforced in varying ways and degrees by history. The mixture is, of course, not by any means the same wherever tradition has ruled. For example, a professor of Indian civilization has stated that, while Christian and Moslem scholars are both deeply interested in historical dates and facts, 'in India, on the other

hand, the pundits have never attached any importance to these matters. In the everlasting cycle of time and in the endless succession of reincarnations, it is quite meaningless to know when something occurred; only the fact itself and its moral implications are important.' (1. 101).

Obviously there is a great gulf fixed between a mode of thought in which a kind of timeless history is combined with a religious philosophy and, at the opposite extreme, the attitude of mind that prizes accuracy in the recording of facts and dates in history, on the one hand, and the use of questionnaires, punched cards, and IBM machines to produce, as a contribution to sociological research, a sort of X-ray snapshot of a society's vitals, on the other. And yet there is a likelihood that, in many cases, it is precisely this opposite extreme that will be embraced by those who are shaking off what they feel to be the restrictive bonds of tradition. A glance at, for example, bibliographies of recent literature and current research in India makes it clear that this is so. While it is equally clear that the injudicious and indiscriminate use of Western sample survey methods provokes, among other Indian sociologists, a reaction and a resistance which could, in certain circumstances, lead to the rejection of Western influences altogether and the assertion of a sociological isolationism. At a recent congress of Indian sociologists reference was made to 'the use of modern "scientific" techniques imported from outside as part of technical aid and "know-how"' to which Indian scholars are inclined to succumb. And it was further argued that problems of cultural change 'cannot be analysed and understood from a value-neutral or positivistic and empirical standpoint to which, however, modern social scientists show a superstitious attachment'.

It is clear to me that, if we are to internationalize social science, we must concentrate on achieving mutual understanding in that intermediate area which lies between general theory and philosophical (or ideological) explanation on the one hand, and data-collecting on the other. It is here that one finds most misunderstanding, and when I use the word, I do not mean disagreement. Maximum disagreement will be found at the ideological level, but I believe that this

matters less than one might imagine. But by 'misunderstanding' I mean the situation in which one man does not realize what the other is trying to do.

To illustrate this, let me turn to what I regard as the third group of social scientists in the contemporary world. The first two are the group of those who belong to the originating European civilization, wherever they may now be located, and the group of those who belong to the traditional cultures of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. The third group consists of those who live and work in societies whose ideology is dominated by the teaching of Marx and his disciples. There are no peoples more continuously preoccupied with a conception of their society than these, but this conception is based on a social science which is radically different from those of the other two groups. We must have all three groups in view to complete the picture of the divided world in which we are trying to internationalize the social sciences.

During the past year and a half I have been concerned with the planning of a number of conferences of social scientists coming from the area of which the geographical, and perhaps also the ideological, extremes are represented by the United States and the Soviet Union. Each meeting was confined to one social science discipline, and the general aim was to promote international understanding in and through the social sciences. The political science meeting was organized in too great a hurry, made a poor start, and never really settled into its stride. The barriers to understanding were least in evidence among the lawyers, who found that on most points they all spoke much the same language. The economists also found common ground to meet on, but there were some interesting episodes from which certain tentative conclusions can be drawn. The main subject under discussion was the factors that determine the level and structure of national production, and this led to a comparison of notes on the methods used by economists, and by governments, to collect the information and make the estimates on which their plans or policies must be based. At a very early stage a conflict arose over the question whether the relations within the productive process should

be regarded as one of the factors of production. The Westerner said 'no' and the Easterner with equal emphasis said 'yes'. The 'Westerners' said they fully realized the importance of these relations, but that they did not belong to the same category of concepts as the factors of production as presented in their analytical system. The 'Easterners' said, or implied, that in that case their analytical system was at fault and that, if they did not include these relations among the factors of production then, whatever they might say to the contrary, they would not in fact give them the importance they deserved. If one casts an eye back over the history of economics in the West, one may well feel that there were some grounds for this suspicion. But the point of the story is that neither side yielded an inch: the deadlock was complete. This cannot be wondered at, since the role of the relations of production in the body of Marxist theory is absolutely crucial. Nevertheless, the subject was dropped and, as the debate moved on, it appeared that the failure to resolve this theoretical issue had no effect whatever on the mutual understanding achieved when the economists began to discuss more practical matters.

There was a second episode which, if I remember right, arose from the discussion of a theoretical paper which had described, in simplified terms, the 'ideal type' of a free market economy in which a satisfactory distribution of resources is obtained because the operation of the price system automatically corrects maldistribution. Often it over-corrects a little, so that the economic system advances by a process of oscillation about a moving point of equilibrium. This concept of progress by feed-back was quite alien to the minds of the 'Easterners'. It appeared to them to be wasteful—a system composed of a series of errors. If maldistribution occurs, it means that planning is inefficient, and steps should be taken to see that it does not occur again. Here, too, there was a deadlock. Nevertheless the failure to agree on this point did not seem to create any serious obstacle to understanding in the discussion that followed. This is not altogether surprising. Once you get down to an examination of the methods used to estimate the demand for capital and labour,

and of the maldistributions which have occurred in the past, it is easy to forget the difference of opinion as to whether maldistribution is a natural feature of economic progress or the regrettable results of defective planning. In either case the practical objective is to reduce maldistribution to the minimum. And the need to set limits to the impact of theory on practice arises also from the fact that differences of opinion with regard to theory are bound to develop within a single school of thought, as well as between different schools. The view I have just quoted, that socialist planning should, in principle, be perfect, sounds dangerously like the 'voluntarist' heresy which, according to Oskar Lange, 'denied that economic laws operated under socialism and put forward the assumption that in a socialist State the controllers of economic policy can do whatever they wish' (11. 2–3).

The sociologists, who met in Moscow, knew very well that they could not expect to make much progress towards mutual understanding in a week. There are too many fundamentally different conceptions in the world as to what sociology is, and it is not only a question of differences between Marxists and others. Here again, as with the economists, it was found that one cannot expect to achieve greater mutual understanding by making a direct attack on differences in basic theory. Attention should be directed rather to matters of fact and of method. The most helpful questions are: what do you know about your social conditions, and by what means do you gather this knowledge?

I have time to give only one example. In comparing inequalities of income in different societies the sociologists inevitably touched on the theory of class structure. An argument developed as to what is really meant by the statement that class structure is based on ownership of the instruments of production. It eventually appeared that the crucial difference between capitalist and socialist societies, in the eyes of the Soviet sociologists, was the existence in the former of a small group of big industrial tycoons, of millionaires, who exercise enormous power over the economic life of the society without being responsible to any public authority. The fact that there are thousands of persons having a share in the

ownership of the instruments of production, without exercising any power, and the possibility that the power of the millionaires may be only to a limited extent based on ownership might be admitted, and the discussion could then concentrate on the question whether the Marxist estimate of the power of these industrial magnates was or was not exaggerated. The theoretical controversy remained unresolved, but faded somewhat into the background.

It is more difficult to proceed towards a better mutual understanding by concentrating on facts in sociology than in economics, because sociological facts contain a larger element of subjective interpretation, which cannot be detached from them. Even, let us suppose, it were established that the actual scale of income inequality were much the same in two countries with different ideologies, it could still be argued that the effects of this inequality were quite different. When social studies are dominated by an all-embracing and all-sufficient theory, which is married to a political ideology, this subjectivity of factual data has to be protected. Objectivity in any discussion of the nature of society is a menace. But operationally, in a planned society, scientific objectivity is necessary. The natural sciences, at least, must be scientifically used, and their acceptance may be cautiously extended to the social sciences, in their more practical aspects. The story can be followed in the reactions of Christianity to the first challenge of, say, astronomy or Darwinism, and in its gradual accomodation to and eventual acceptance of the new world of ideas that they created. It can also be illustrated by the way in which orthodox Communism handled the problem of statistics. In 1950, at a specially convened conference of statisticians in Moscow, the leading spokesman said that the main obstacle to the proper development of statistical method was 'the formal mathematics school of thought (which) considers statistics (to be) a universal science for the study of nature and society based ultimately on the mathematical law of large numbers and not on Marxist-Leninist theory'. When one speaker objected that it might be dangerous 'to exclude nature and its laws as a subject to be studied by statistics', he was told that he 'was guilty of

objectivism in his defense of the bourgeois position on statistics'. But four years later a new pronouncement was made to the effect that there are two kinds of statistics, 'one called "mathematical statistics", which applies to nature, and another called simply "statistics" which applies to society' (7. 283–5). The latter was still to be subject to ideological control. This view met with strong opposition from those who wished to free statistics from such restraints, an opposition which could not be silenced. In 1956, at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. Mikoyan said: 'without a most careful examination of all the statistical data, . . . without systematizing these data, without analysing and drawing general conclusions from them, no scientific economic work is possible' (8. 21). And without scientific economic work of some kind, a planned society cannot long survive.

Let me make one final comment on this theme. At the Moscow meeting of sociologists a hot debate developed, as it obviously must, on the role of theory in sociology. Those who maintained that only one theory was needed, because it was true and universal, namely the theory of historical materialism, accused the sociologists in capitalist countries of collecting facts on the basis of no theory at all. The accused hotly denied this charge and explained that inability to accept any one theory as containing the whole truth and final truth did not imply indifference to theory as such; quite the contrary in fact. Obviously there was a definite misunderstanding here about the nature of 'Western' sociology, and it was one which could be substantially reduced by discussion. Was there any misunderstanding in the opposite direction? In a sense there was. A Soviet sociologist spoke with feeling, drawing, it seemed, on his own personal experience, about the needs of a people who have overturned the edifice of social tradition and, after passing through chaos, begun to create a new society extending over vast expanses of territory, a society in which they must play a more active part than was ever played by their fathers under the old régime. The first necessity, he said, is to help these people to see and understand the society they are creating,

to grasp the essential meaning of its nature and to appreciate its position in the history of mankind and in the contemporary world. Compared with this, the refinement of hypotheses about the ranking of occupations, or sociological research into the factors which cause miners to keep pigeons (one of the examples cited during the debate), seemed to him to be of little importance. The point was well made. Whatever might be the final judgement on it, obviously one could not understand the situation without taking it into account.

I have cited this incident here, because it may act as a bridge from the first to the second aspect of my theme, from understanding *in* to understanding *through* social science. In what follows I shall draw on the reports of some other UNESCO conferences (with which I was not personally concerned) designed to explore ways of deepening understanding between the Americas and Europe, and between the Occident and the Orient. The participants included philosophers, historians, and social scientists.

Let us take a glance to see what happens when a group of highly intelligent, well-educated, and widely read scholars meet together with the express object of arriving at a better understanding of their respective cultures, and come prepared to contribute towards this end. How near do they get to concensus on these issues, and how quickly does misunderstanding evaporate under the warm sun of knowledge? The result of this brief inspection is, I fear, rather discouraging. The subject was the cultural and moral relations between the Old and the New World. This was discussed at two meetings, the first of which was held in Brazil. At the very outset the spokesman of the host country complained bitterly that only one of the contributions submitted to the meeting had paid the slightest attention to the existence, in the New World, of Latin America. They all concentrated their attention on the United States. This was an unfortunate opening to the proceedings, and it gradually became clear that deep anxiety was felt by the Latin Americans present about the invasion of their countries by certain elements of the culture of the United States, an anxiety so clearly expressed that Robert Frost was prompted to

exclaim, 'Do you regard us as monsters?' (3. 134). And, according to one speaker, the position as regards North America and Europe was no better. 'Relations between these two continents, the Old and the New, are bad', he said, 'so bad, indeed, that they are a cause for serious anxiety' (ibid. 221).

It was also clear that the speakers believed that profound misunderstanding as to the true nature of European, Latin-American and United States cultures underlay the suspicion obviously felt by members of each about the others. To drive home this point they sketched the mistaken views which, they said, were prevalent in some places. Let me give two examples. Roger Bastide spoke of Latin America as 'that part of the continent which many politicians, and indeed men of culture, especially in Europe, tend to regard as the abode of savages, Negroes, half-castes and illiterates'; 'South America seems to the European to be a second primeval chaos, a new creation, while North America seems an apocalypse' (ibid. 20–21). Secondly, George Shuster said that the false picture Europe held of American culture 'was jazz blared out from dawn to midnight, was a certain type of motion picture, was anti-intellectualism, was an infantile purely quantitative sex mania given to festooning a sequence of temporarily cherished squaws with bracelets and beads' (ibid. 56).

One might think that, if these learned men started by drawing such an alarming picture of current misunderstanding, they should find it easy to demonstrate that great progress could be made towards a better understanding by that sober contemplation of reality of which they themselves were capable. But the discussions did not turn out quite like that. Expression was given to the familiar idea that North America is a new society, and still somewhat crude in many respects. But one speaker doubted this. Referring to the years of economic crisis in the 1930's, he said: 'I wonder whether they did not mark the beginning of a process of aging, or at any rate maturing in America, which is deeply graven in the mental attitude.' It is clear that he must have used the word 'sclerosis', because his remarks were followed by an explosion from Lucien Febvre, who exclaimed,

'Sclerosis—No! Sclerosis of what? Sclerosis of a world bursting with life and youthful vitality as America is? We cannot begin to speak of this world without the word "young" springing to our minds' (ibid. 170–2). Yet a third point of view was expressed by André Maurois, who said: 'Those who do not like America are much inclined to criticize it as infantile. The term is exceedingly ill-chosen. America is adolescent' (ibid. 318). So you see, you can take your choice. America may be infantile, young, adolescent, or senile. For each opinion you can quote high authority.

Let me mention another case, which is amusing rather than disturbing. Speaking of Americanization, one representative of Europe said: 'The threat hanging over us, the threat we feel to be hanging over us, is not something evil, it is a vacuum, such as is produced by rapid movement' (ibid. 198). But another, considering the same phenomenon, called it 'a flood of American products poured into the ideological vacuum of the Old World' (ibid. 224). So we are presented with the illuminating spectacle of one vacuum invading another.

The speakers I have quoted were not professional social scientists, giving us the fruits of their studies and research, although they may be said to represent very closely related disciplines. Were the professional social scientists, of whom a few were present, more successful? In one respect yes, but in another, no. For instance, Paul Rivet put at the disposal of the conference his great knowledge of Latin America, but by doing so he did not merely chase from the room the false and facile generalizations of the intelligent amateurs. He shattered all possibility of generalization of any kind, at least on a level that would be intelligible to the educated public of another continent. He said that, 'in the case of Spanish and Portuguese America, similarity of language is a mere screen for the profound divergences which exist between the different parts of that vast territory'. And this similarity itself was an illusion, because of the great variety of dialects. The same was true of religion. Christianity had undergone considerable modifications, and the former native religion had left its mark on the ceremonies of many churches.

Nevertheless, language and religion together provided a foundation for cultural unity which was firm compared with the numerous differences in all other aspects of life (3. 39–40). And yet Rivet was all too ready to offer generalizations about the United States, on whose cultures he was not to the same extent a specialist.

Time will not allow me to pursue this subject in any detail. It is not necessary for me to give you examples of the attempts that have been made to render one culture intelligible to the representatives of another. You are all familiar with many of them. It is obvious that any account which aims at the enlightenment of the educated public must make use of simplification and generalization. We know that works of this kind, written by professional social scientists, have had a great public success. But often, at the same time, they have been sharply criticized by the experts. And they may also be rejected by the lay reader belonging to the culture that is being described. Ruth Benedict's careful analysis of Japanese society (13), and Geoffrey Gorer's vivid picture of life in the United States (14) have been attacked on both fronts.

From this we see that there are two pertinent questions to ask about the communication of understanding of foreign cultures. First: is this best done by a native of the culture described, or by a native of the culture to whom the communication is addressed? And secondly: is it best done by a sociologist or by somebody else?

I feel certain that, generally speaking, communication is best made by a member of the society to whom it is addressed. For understanding of the unfamiliar is most effectively conveyed by explicit, or even more by implicit, comparison or contrast with what is familiar.

More difficult to answer is the question whether the sociologist is the best agent for communication of this kind. I am inclined to believe that he usually is not. The very fact that the sociologist is trained to see social systems as wholes, and to use the results of analysis to arrive at a synthesis, constitutes a temptation to him, if he is asked to simplify down to the level of the educated public, to try to do too much with too

little. 'The study of national character', says Professor Ginsberg, 'is to be approached not through an investigation of individual differences in behaviour, but of the qualities manifested in the collective life of nations, their traditions and public policy' (9. 154). One reason why many attempts by sociologists (or anthropologists) to convey an understanding of national character have met with strong criticism is that they have not followed this advice. But even if they do, their troubles are not over. The 'collective life of nations, their traditions and public policy' are matters in which sociologists should feel completely at home, but when you begin to explain 'the qualities manifested' in them to the lay reader and the general public, then you must watch your step. It is all too easy to pick on one or two striking traits, and to make them explain everything. It is very probable that the historian, being by nature more modest in his attempts to explain (in the above sense), is better at communication. Perhaps the educated public can get a clearer understanding of traditional Chinese society from a Tawney (15) than from a Talcott Parsons (16).

In fact it may be the case that a statement asserting that a particular attitude, mode of thought, or pattern of action is characteristic of a people may be most useful if no attempt is made to apply it. It may give a sudden insight into a strange and unfamiliar world, and thus open the mind to a true understanding of information about that world as it is gradually accumulated. The interpretation is not applied until, so to speak, the information clamours for it. The response is of the 'of course! now I remember!' kind, rather than the 'yes, I suppose I see what you mean' of the weary student who has had his nose well rubbed in a pet theory, or the 'how fascinating it all is!' of the credulous romantic.

Here are two examples of statements about the time-sense which happen to have come my way while I was preparing this lecture. A recent study of the adaptation of the Egyptian villager to urban life and industrial employment revealed that the first things he buys with his savings are a watch and a mirror. He becomes aware of time and anxious about his personal appearance. Discussion of this report led, however,

to the tentative conclusion that what he had discovered about time was that you could identify fixed points within it at which certain things must be done. He knew what it meant to be on time, to be punctual. But he did not yet know what it meant to waste time. That involved an effort of abstraction which he could not yet make. Such was the hypothesis put forward (17. 6).

An anthropologist, in a report on a field study of a nomadic people in Persia, says, 'a breakdown of the migratory cycle in the two main dimensions of place and time is meaningless in the normal contexts of nomadic life; "March", as generally conceptualized by the nomadic herder, is a place, just as much as a season'. When he tried to get them to distinguish between the time of the year and the locality as possible causes of a luxuriant crop of truffles, he failed. 'My two alternatives were to them two ways of expressing the same experience' (18). These are essentially sociological insights, and they are valuable, provided you do not try to make them explain too much.

But my answer to this question remains inconclusive. I am suggesting that the essential task of the sociologist is to provide the material for mutual understanding, and that he is not necessarily the best person to communicate this material to others. And that brings me back, in conclusion, to my first theme—international comprehension *in* the social sciences—the professional aspect of the subject. Because I am convinced that the proper execution of this task of collecting and arranging the material demands, in the contemporary world, close collaboration between the social scientists at the two ends of the communication process. And from this follows, in turn, the need to internationalize the social sciences.

When I reflect on this situation, I find again and again that the difficulty with which we have to contend is that of persuading people that the best course is one that lies between two extremes. Such advice smacks of compromise, and compromise has won for itself a bad name in a world of conflicting ideals, a name which, perhaps on account of some defect in my nature, I cannot believe that it deserves.

One middle course which is relevant here is that between the extreme which denies all value to subjective insight, or intuition, and the other extreme which asserts that a sociologist cannot understand anything that he has not himself experienced. Subjective insight is sociology's great compensation for the disadvantage of dealing with a universe not composed of elements which, when isolated, are always found to have identical properties. But subjective insight is not in itself a sufficient source of information. It is an indispensable aid to scientific research. It needs to be harnessed to a discipline. So it would be madness for Western sociologists to deny the importance of the contribution that trained Asian sociologists can make, with the help of their insight, to the study of their own culture. On the other hand, it is equally inadmissible for Asian sociologists to deny the contribution that can be made to that same study by the objective scrutiny of the foreigner.

I would call this the middle path between introspection and positivism. My second example also relates, but in a different way, to the problem of sociological ethnocentrism. We might call it the middle path between universalism and regionalism. I have deliberately chosen to say 'regionalism' and not 'nationalism', because this is an outstanding phenomenon of today. As seen through the eyes of the European or North American, the world falls into a number of cultural regions, defined, not so much in terms of actual cultural homogeneity, but rather by reference to an overt assertion of cultural unity, which is operational and even institutional in character. And in some cases it continues to be so even though the cultural region may be split by acute political rivalries. The important regions are Latin America, Asia (but not quite the whole of it), the Arab States, and Africa (essentially tropical Africa). Eastern Europe is not a region in this sense, since its dominating ideology claims to be universal.

In a region in which sociology is weak or relatively new, or in which it has not yet been intensively or extensively developed, but is now beginning to grow and spread, it is likely to be assumed that programmes of teaching and

research should be focused on the regional society itself, almost to the exclusion of everything else. This is natural and, up to a point, acceptable. But it can go too far. It may, as we have seen, encourage the idea that, because the regional society is 'different', therefore the regional sociology must be 'different' too. And that is dangerous. But it should be noted that, in many repects, the allegedly universal sociology practised in the more advanced countries strikes our regional friends as being in fact very parochial; and this is admitted by many of its practitioners, as they become conscious of their relative ignorance of the remoter areas of the world. That, no doubt, is why there is so much evidence today of a desire on the part of American and European sociologists to enrich their store of knowledge and understanding by turning their attention more seriously to such regions as Asia and Latin America.

The middle path, in this case, is the one which runs between an extreme regionalism, which holds that regional cultures must have their own regional sociologies, on the one side, and a rather blind universalism on the other, which imagines, with Tennyson, that a complete grasp of the nature of the flower in the crannied wall is sufficient to reveal what God and man is, or, in other words, that universal truth about the whole is to be found in any one of its parts.

At the moment I believe the chief need in sociology is for the deeper study of the differences which distinguish one culture from another. Such a development may be obstructed both by the search for universal concepts and laws (which in any case are liable, when found, to be somewhat jejune), and by the parochialism which rivets attention on the immediate neighbourhood. I want to see comparative studies, for example, of Europe and Asia in which both European and Asian sociologists collaborate, but not by each studying exclusively his own culture, but by each studying both cultures. And if collaboration of this kind is to take place, there must be agreement as to what a sociological investigation really is; to this extent sociology must be internationalized.

My experience suggests that this kind of agreement cannot be reached by attacking the points at which the major

conflicts of ideology exist. These, and the political conflicts associated with them, are the most stubborn aspects you can find. Basic theory, which is linked with ideology, may prove equally intractable. The most hopeful way of starting is by exchanging experience gained in the gathering of information needed for practical purposes, whether in relation to official social programmes or to the education of the citizen. The questions to be asked are: how do you find out the things that you need to know about your society? how do you explain its nature to your growing children and young people? and how do you deal with this or that social problem, and why? A similar conclusion was reached by those who were set the task of defining a body of universally acceptable human rights. Professor McKeon has noted that the search for 'eventual principles' led merely to the elaboration and to the strengthening of contradictory philosophies. 'On the other hand, no difficulty arose in the way of an agreement on a list of rights and on a plan designed to co-ordinate them' (5. 31–32).

But this method of procedure is only a means to an end. It does not solve the problem; it only prepares the ground for a solution, by increasing mutual understanding at a very practical level. The crucial point at which a real advance can be made towards an internationalized social science is the point at which data of this limited kind are fitted into a framework of concept and theory at the appropriate level of generalization. It is here that misunderstanding is most likely to yield to the forces of argument and to the free exchange of ideas, even in the present state of ideological division from which the world is suffering. It is easy to see why many of those who devote themselves to the cause of peace and international co-operation should regard the social sciences as trouble-makers. For it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the wars of religion have been succeeded by the wars of social doctrine. And social doctrines, everywhere today, are expounded and defended by what is believed to be social science. But this is no reason for denouncing social science as a source of discord. On the contrary. It is precisely because it is so deeply involved in the conflicts

which are born 'in the minds of men' that it should have the power, if not quickly to resolve them, at least gradually to eat away the misconceptions and the misunderstandings from which so much of their strength is drawn.

It is the business of social science to investigate things in order to achieve true knowledge. Let us hope that the results of its efforts may be such as were described by Confucius, when he said:

> The achieving of true knowledge depends upon the investigation of things. When things are investigated, then true knowledge is achieved; when true knowledge is achieved, then the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, then the heart is set right (or then the mind sees right); when the heart is set right, then the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the family life is regulated; when the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in this world (19. 323).

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