Social Philosophy

Past and Future

DAYA KRISHNA

AN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
SIMLA - 1969

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY: PAST AND FUTURE

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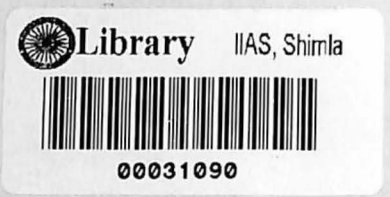

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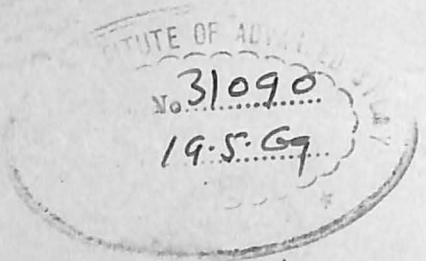

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DEDICATED

To

The Memory of

Late Prof. M. M. Bhalla

FOREWORD

These lectures continue the theme of my earlier book *Considerations Towards a Theory of Social Change*, though they form a self-contained whole and possess a unity of their own independent of the earlier work. They seek to focus attention on an aspect of thought about man and society which most scientists and philosophers happen to miss; that is, the effect of their thought in shaping the human and social reality itself. Man's thought about himself and society is not causally ineffective. But if this be accepted, its implications have to be understood by all those who concern themselves with society and man in any capacity whatsoever. The present lectures attempt to spell out these implications for the attention of the social scientists and philosophers for consideration and discussion.

The past civilizations, in this context, are treated as the result of the ways in which men conceived of themselves and society and the two of the most significant among them, the Indian and the Western, are singled out and discussed as paradigmatic cases illustrating the basic contentions of these lectures. An attempt is made to provide a focal concept around which the thinking in the social sciences may be organized and which may bridge the gap, and provide the continuity between the great typal civilizations of the past and open the way for their fecundating relationship with the present and the future.

Freedom, it is suggested, is such a concept and if it be given an operational definition and subjected to quantitative criteria of measurement, it might provide an effective guide to the policy sciences which seem so much in demand today by the planner and the politician. The link between the mathematical

concept of model and utopia is explained and it is suggested that the building of scientifically articulated utopias should be the task of the social scientist of the future.

These lectures were delivered at the invitation of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, and I am thankful to the authorities for providing me with the opportunity to crystallize my thought on the subject.

The indirect presence of my friends and colleagues at the University of Rajasthan would be evident to an attentive reader of these pages. To one of them, the late Prof. M. M. Bhalla, this book is dedicated. His sudden death has deprived us all of a mind so versatile and sensitive that it is difficult to think of another like him. I still remember vividly the time when he made the point referred to on page 47 standing on the gate of the garden one morning. Who could have thought, then, that soon there will be no more mornings or evenings or late nights with their subtle intellectual delight over cups of coffee and an element of charm, sparkle and grace which is so rarely found these days in company, private or public ?

Jaipur:
29th January 1969

DAYA KRISHNA

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THE CONCEPT OF SOCIETY

What sort of a thing is society which the social scientist so avidly studies? Is it something completely independent of the way human beings think about it and conceive it to be? Or, is it affected in its very being by the way men think about it and conceive it to be? Has it, so to say, an essence of its own which men have only to find and discover? Or, is it something like what the existentialists say about man; that is, something that has no essence of its own, but something which is made and created out of the infinite choices of diverse men? What we confront as society is, on this view, not something given by nature but rather that which was created by men in the past and that which is being made and re-made by men in the present. It is like the habits of a man's own character, created by choices made in the past, but now confronting him and others as something 'given', something to be taken as 'datum', something to be worked with or worked against, but in any case inevitably to be taken into account.

The analogy with existentialist thought may be carried a step further. To say that society has no essence of its own is not to say that one can make or re-make it as one likes, that there are no limits or constraints within which alone the creative choice may operate and make itself felt. Neither in respect of human individual nor in respect of human society the denial of essence has ever meant or perhaps could ever mean the absolute absence of all limits and constraints. Not even in art, which is the symbol of all that bespeaks of human creativity at its highest, is there an absence of limit or constraint which has not to be adapted, used and overcome. In fact, there would be little meaning in creative activity if

there were no material to be shaped, no resistance to be overcome. The notion of *grenzsituationen*, then, remains as relevant in the case of society as it has been found in the case of the individual by existentialist thinkers.

The question 'What is Society ?', then, seems far more akin to the question 'What is Man ?' than, say, 'What is Nature ? ' However much the dichotomy between Nature and Man may go against our instinct for seeking a unified knowledge and abhorrence of anything but a unitary reality, we cannot but note the radical distinctions between them even with respect to the processes of knowledge. The way we conceive Nature does not seem to affect in any significant way the natural processes themselves. Their independence of knowledge is the very condition of the seeking of truth in this realm. But can we say the same with respect to either Man or Society ? Will it be really true to say that the way we conceive of man and society does not affect the way they are or the way they have been or even the way they will be ? Is not the way we conceive them to be intimately bound up with what they actually come to be ? In case this be the situation to even the least imaginable extent, it would be positively disastrous to foster the illusion that our conceptual activity with respect to these objects can be value-neutral in the same sense as our conceptual activity is supposed to be with respect to natural objects. If it be true in any sense that man and society are deeply affected by the way we conceive them to be, then it is an imperative duty to make ourselves and others aware of the value-implications of our conceptions and hold ourselves responsible for the same.

The distinction between those subject-matters which are affected by the way we think and those which do not is an important one for the cognitive enterprise of man. Even if it be contended that the distinction is only a relative one and that Man and Society are, in this sense, continuous with that

which is studied in the natural sciences, even then the difference between what is only marginal and what is relatively central remains. The essential and inescapable disturbance of the object in the sub-atomic realm by the instruments that seek to observe them, usually described by Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy, is something analogous in the realm of Nature to the one we find in the study of Man and Society also. Yet, though analogous, it is essentially different in important respects from the one that obtains when Man, whether individually or in Society, is the object of determination and study. Here, it is not a physical instrument such as a light-ray that makes a difference in the object but the act of consciousness itself. In nuclear physics, up till now, no one has argued that it is man's consciousness, his act of trying to know the object, the way he tries to conceive and formulate it that affects the object and introduces an element of indeterminacy in it. In the study of Man and Society, it is just consciousness itself that makes a difference to that which is the object of knowledge and study. Further, because of this, the difference that is made is basically qualitative rather than quantitative as in the case of the physical phenomena. Yet, the parallel, though differing in certain essential respects, assures us that the said limitation need not stand in the way of a more effective study and knowledge of the phenomenon concerned. The limitation revealed by the Heisenberg principle has not stood in the way of the advance in our knowledge of nuclear phenomena. Similarly, the limitation, if any, in our knowledge of Man and Society need not prove a hindrance in the progress and pursuit of knowledge in these domains.

Is there, then, a choice in the way we may conceive Society to be? Is this a choice which is not governed *solely* by considerations of what more easily and adequately conforms to or articulates well the specific object or domain it refers to? Can the possible consequences of a concept relevantly enter

into its formulation and be the ground for our preferring it to another ? And if we do so, will it be in accordance with the highest rigours of what we have come to regard as the scientific method ? These are some of the questions that we have to ponder and find answers for, if we are not to open the flood-gates to fancy and prejudice.

Before we do this, however, let us reflect a little over the notion of the adequacy of a concept without any reference to those domains or subject-matters where the concept-forming activity may itself be said to make a difference to what is attempted to be grasped or formulated in the concept. In other words, what makes for the adequacy of a concept ? Shall we say that it is the correctness of its reflection of the reality it concerns itself with ? Or, is it the success of the action based on the presupposition that the concept correctly reflects the causal relationships obtaining among phenomena ? Or, is it just a tool whose adequacy is basically judged by what we want to use it for ? Even in the context of cognitive activity, there may be a diversity of concepts having essentially different functions which cooperatively help in leading the activity to a successful conclusion. Whatever the choice we may make between these and even several other alternatives, at least one characteristic shall be found implicitly or explicitly in them all. This basically consists in their judging the adequacy of a conceptual formulation in terms of its capacity to lead to successful action. But what exactly is the success or failure of action in terms of which the adequacy is to be judged ?

The Hindu answer to the question has traditionally been found ultimately to lie in the absence of even the possibility of suffering and/or a state of undisturbed positive bliss. However, even if this or some other version of it be accepted, the question remains as to how this criterion is to be applied to societies rather than individuals. It will be difficult to say that societies are happy or unhappy and, in any case, the

idea of the absence of the possibility of any suffering or rather difficulties in their case seems not only meaningless but also impossible, even if some meaning were to be found for the expressions concerned.

The question, I should like to urge on you, is rather important. We are talking about society and, frankly, what sort of failure would it be that would reveal the falsity of our knowledge of society? False knowledge, let us remember, is causally effective. It does positively affect our behaviour and action and lead us in certain directions. It is not like absolute non-being which, because it is such, is supposed to make no difference to the universe as we know of, either in the present or in the future. In fact, as far as man's future is concerned, whether it be individual or collective, the results of false knowledge are perhaps even more important than the results of knowledge deemed to be true. In any case, this is bound to be admitted that the results of false knowledge confront us as recalcitrant facts shaping our destiny in an even more intimate way than the results of true knowledge. Is not the history of individuals, societies and nations full of the past they would wish to get rid off and yet which hangs around their neck like Coleridge's albatross with perhaps not even the possibility of ultimate release through love or suffering or both. An individual may perhaps get release through what we can only call transcendent grace, but as far as societies are concerned it is difficult even to conceive as to what could it possibly be.

Falsity of knowledge is supposed to be intimately related to failure of action. But the failure of action is itself judged in terms of what we want to achieve, and what we want to achieve may not only be multiple in its different directions but incompatible with each other. Is it not true that so many times all of us want, as the saying goes, to have our cake and eat it too? But if this be true, then the failure of

action would not, in such a situation, be due to the falsity of knowledge but rather to the nature of what we want to achieve. Could there, then, be such a thing as the falsity of what we want to achieve? If the term 'falsity' seems too awkward, would 'adequacy' or 'legitimacy' seem more relevant? In each case, there are bound to be difficulties, but the adoption of 'falsity', I should like to suggest, would ultimately provide deeper insight into the matter.

The idea that failure of action may be due not only to the falsity of our knowledge but also to the falsity in what we want to achieve deserves some further exploration. Have not we all known the situation where we have achieved what we wanted to achieve and yet remained unfulfilled and dissatisfied? How shall we understand and adequately articulate such a situation? There is nothing wrong with our knowledge, for it has led us to the particular end that we wanted to achieve. Where (then) is the snag? Where have the things gone wrong? Have not we got what we wanted to get? Why, then, do we feel unfulfilled and dissatisfied? Surely, something must have been wrong with what we wanted or, perhaps, with the process of wanting itself. This, at least, was the direction taken by Indian thought. Either one was not wanting what one really ought to have wanted to reach satisfaction or fulfilment in life or one did not see that 'wanting' was an intrinsically self-defeating process as it was basically analogous to something like a self-contradictory proposition. It was contended, therefore, that ultimately one could either want only God or a transcendent state of one's own being. The only other alternative to this was to get rid of wanting itself, to destroy the very root from which desire or want sprang again and again. The various schools of classical Hinduism and Buddhism may be distinguished by the relative weight and emphasis they give to these alternatives in their diagnostics of the fundamentally unsatisfactory situation of man, whatever he may think or do.

The search for the criterion of the falsity of our knowledge about society is important. But even more important is the question as to what we would do in terms of knowledge with those realms which are affected by the way we think about them. In these realms, the very act of forming the conception is a valuational act. It is, so to say, a constituent part entering into the framing of the thing we are thinking about. The conception itself becomes an active ingredient in the forming of the reality in these domains. When Descartes said, '*cogito, ergo sum*', he could easily have added that what I become is what I think myself to be. In the case of societies the same equation may be said to hold, though with a certain difference. Here, the conception has to be shared or accepted by a significant minority to become effective in the shaping of the reality we call society. The anthropologists have given us the distinction between society and culture and yet it is they who have also made us aware that a society is specifically what it is because of the particular and distinctive culture that it has. Culture is what gives uniqueness to a society and, ultimately, culture is nothing but the way a society conceives itself to be. The diversities of societies are rooted in the diversity of cultures, and the various cultures that the anthropologists and the historians have studied are distinguished by the differing conceptions of man and society that have been held at different places and times. If any proof were needed for the contention that the way we conceive of man and society affects the type of men and societies we have, a brief look at the *Human Relations Area Files* should suffice for the answer.

The act of conceiving the nature of society is, then, a valuational act. It is not merely a free building of a hypothesis which shall be verified to be true or false by the data about social facts that we would encounter in our investigations. Rather, it is a choice and a decision as to which type of society one would like to have. The society may never be

shaped in the way one conceives it to be. There may be many reasons for this. One of the most obvious ones is that it may not be communicated to others or, even if communicated, may not reach a sufficient number of people or, even if it reaches, it fails to inspire their imagination. The people it reaches may not be significant in terms of causal effectivity, though it may inspire them to be such. But, whatever the obstacles, a thinker cannot forswear the responsibility of possibly shaping the society in the way he conceives it to be. This itself, therefore, he has to take into account in formulating his conception of society.

The value-neutrality which the cognitive attitude is usually supposed to imply may possibly be safeguarded in such a situation by spelling out the diverse value-perspectives which the different conceptions of society involve. It would be only by giving up the surreptitious claim that the conception of society one is urging is a purely factual one and by bringing into the open the various value-perspectives involved that one would do justice to the claim of objectivity which all science involves.

The freedom of conceptual construction is recognized these days by what is known as the 'model-building' activity in the sciences. But this is a freedom through which we are supposed to comprehend a given reality. However, where the reality is supposed to be affected by the way we conceive it to be, there the freedom is bound to be of a different kind. The freedom, firstly, is a sort of responsible freedom. One cannot just assume for the sake of assuming, for what one assumes has actual consequences which one may not desire or approve of. Secondly, there is therefore, at least a moral demand for spelling out the value-dimension explicitly. The pose of there being no value-dimension in the conceptual formulations of the social scientist is not only dishonest, but may produce disastrous consequences for himself and others in that the society increasingly may come to conceive itself as he has conceived it

to be and approximate nearer to that conception. The likelihood of this increases in proportion to the agreement in the conception of society that the social scientists begin to reach among themselves. The more such an agreement is reached, the more likely it is that the people at large conceive society in that way also and thus help in bringing it into being.

However it be, if once it is admitted that certain sorts of questions may reasonably be asked about society which cannot be so asked with regard to natural objects, then a basic difference in their logical type has to be admitted. We can, for example, reasonably ask ourselves and others as to what sort of society we would like to have, a question which seems meaningless when asked with respect to Nature. Similarly, exhortations to improve one's society and make it a subject of intelligent moral concern have meaning; while if they were to be made with respect to the world of nature, they would appear nonsensical.

If the distinction between nature and society be once conceded and if it be admitted that the way we conceive society tends to shape the society in that direction too, then the necessity for a self-conscious explication of the value-presuppositions and the value-consequences of the particular way in which society is proposed to be conceived will have to be admitted by everybody.[1] It would then be an interesting task to delineate, in this background, the various ways in which society has been or can be conceived and the ways in which these diverse conceptions have affected or can affect the shaping of societies.

However interesting and tempting such a task may seem, I do not propose to undertake it in this series of lectures. Rather, I should like to draw your attention to a basic typal difference in the way in which society can be conceived. The only difference that I would like to emphasize and bring to explicit consciousness for consideration and comment here concerns the way in which we ultimately conceive society to be. It may be

conceived either as the *last* term in our thought in terms of which we want to understand everything else or only as an intermediate term beyond which there are other terms to which it is instrumental or subservient in a final sense. In a sense, we live, move and have our being only in and through society. What we think, feel, consider beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, is determined by the fact that we are social beings. It is thus conceived as the equivalent of God, and many sociologists think and proclaim it to be so. In fact, God Himself is supposed to be a projected image of the society in the mind of the particular individual. On the other hand, it seems difficult to believe that society would show even its specific traits, were it not constituted of human individuals who must at least be conceived to have latent possibility in them for engaging in ideal pursuits.

The question 'What is Society?' is closely linked to the question 'What is a human individual?' and the one cannot be answered independently of the other. The sociologist is, in a sense, an interested party in the debate. By his training and profession he gradually gets committed to the ultimacy of society as the last term of human thought in terms of which everything else is to be understood. He sees everything as rooted in a social nexus and as subserving a social end. Whether it be, science or religion, art or morality, love or friendship, each is rooted in society and subserves a social function or end. Durkheim is the classic name associated with such a standpoint. But he is not alone, nor even in a minority. Rather, he articulates explicitly what is implicit in the writings of others. Every sociologist subscribes to his dictum, whether implicitly or explicitly. Society is his God, at least professionally.

But, however persuasive, it is not necessary. Society need not be conceived as the last term of human thought. The centrality may be restored to the human individual who, then, may be viewed as the nucleus of the social cell from which all creativity emanates and originates. In this perspective, then, society

would be conceived as a facilitating mechanism so that the individual may pursue his trans-social ends. Instead of art or religion, friendship or love, being seen as lubricating oil for the functioning of the social machine, the machine itself would be seen as facilitating the emergence and pursuit of various values and its efficiency judged in terms of that performance.

The two conceptions are opposed ways of conceiving society and turn basically on the primacy we give to the individual or society in our thought. As the way we conceive affects the way we become, the choice between the two ways of conceiving becomes a valuational choice also. The cognitive task in such a situation is to make the value-implications explicit and to spell out the possible achievements and perversions within the ambit of one conception or the other. Ideal type constructions may be helpful in throwing into bold relief the diverse possibilities involved in the various choices. Similarly, if we could find some rough parallels in historical cultures which have predominantly conceived society in one way rather than another, it might be helpful in giving a concrete feel to the things we are saying. Keeping both these things in mind, we shall designate the two ultimate contrasts I have sketched above as the Western and the Indian respectively. These give rise to two types of value-achievements, two types of value-perversions and two types of predicaments which we shall try to delineate in the next lecture. Each society, in this perspective, may be seen as the perversion of a basic value-insight which is apprehended by a few and vulgarly interpreted by the many.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. It has been contended by some that the very way in which nature is conceived of has usually been the result of the way a society has been conceived of. (See specially Hans Kelson, *Society and Nature*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1946.) However true in some cases, the possible divergence between the two would hardly be denied.

THE TWO PREDICAMENTS

The two ultimate ways in which we can conceive society in relation to the individuals that compose it, we delineated in the last lecture. We also argued that the choice that we make with respect to either of these conceptions profoundly affects the social and individual reality which we may hope to encounter in the future. The decision between the two, thus, is not to be made in terms of their adequacy to reflect some pre-existent reality, but rather in terms of what we want that reality to be. Either choice, in the true human fashion, leads to its own predicament in which it involves the society and the individuals who have opted, consciously or unconsciously, for that conception. No choice, at least for a human being, proves an unmixed blessing. It shall be our attempt in this lecture to explore the two predicaments generated by the two choices and, for purposes of illustration, we shall use the examples from the Ideal Type schematizations known as Western and Indian cultures which correspond to a great extent to the actual historical cultures also.

The view which conceives of society as the last term of our thought in terms of which and for which everything else is to be understood gives rise to what I have elsewhere called "the sociocentric predicament".[1] The predicament primarily results from viewing the human individual as having nothing in himself that he does not owe to society and, therefore, of seeking the justification for each of his acts in terms of its social consequences. The individual is basically defined in this perspective as a social animal. He achieves his humanity only through the social and cultural tradition in which he grows and which alone makes of him a human being as distinct from a biological animal. Man's

humanity is thus seen as derived from his sociality and it is the process of socialization which really humanizes him in the strict sense of the term. Further, the individual is seen as something ephemeral which comes into being and passes away. What endures is the society of which he is a member. He has become what he is because of the society into which he happened to be born or reared and what survives of him is what he has left to the society which endures after he is dead and gone.

The socio-centric perspective which makes man conceive of himself and society in this way leads to the socio-centric predicament in that the individual who is supposed to have nothing in himself which is not derived from society is simultaneously supposed to be burdened with the absolute responsibility for all that happens to society also. The Greek, the Christian and the Communist versions are merely variations on this one theme which lies at the heart of Western culture. Man is essentially and intrinsically responsible not just for his own self but for others, and this not because he is free and his actions have consequences for others, but because he is social or communal at the very heart of his being and cannot be conceived as apart from them. It is Adam's sin that Christ has to redeem. But Christ, at least, was the son of God. Not so in the vision of Marx. There, it is man conditioned by the society and the class into which he is born who is expected to usher in the reign of freedom and hold himself responsible if he does not do so. For man to have such a burden of others' actions on his shoulders is certainly to develop a sense of community, but it is a community more in guilt than in redemption. Christ, it is true, is supposed to have redeemed humanity by his supreme sacrifice on the Cross and thus proved the community in Redemption also. But, firstly, the humanity which is supposed to have been redeemed by Christ's sacrifice is basically confined to the circle of those who have faith in Christ also and, secondly, even after the supposed redemption of the faithful it is more the original

sin which weighs on the individual and collective consciousness of the West than the freedom from that guilt which the Redemption presumably must have provided.

The idea that one can be responsible for actions which have not been done by one's own self and that one can be redeemed by an action done by somebody else may seem positively outrageous to a sensibility which feels the individual as essentially apart from the relationship with others in which he may happen to be accidentally involved. The doctrine of *karma* in traditional Hindu thought primarily reflects this basic presupposition that it would be an immoral world indeed if one were to reap the fruits of someone else's actions. The monadic morality of the Hindu is thus conceived in an essentially asocial manner. It does not derive from an other-centred consciousness in which the consequences of one's actions on others are the subject of one's focus of attention. Rather, it is the consequences of one's action upon oneself which provides the main grounding of morality in Hindu thought and thus paves the way for a very different kind of perspective on the whole issue of action and one's relations with others. At the deepest level, not merely what one does has consequences upon oneself but, conversely, whatever happens to one could *only* be the result of one's own actions. Not only do one's own actions have consequences on oneself but, if the world is to be a moral world, nothing else could.

The socio-centric perspective, which the predominant Western tradition may be said to exemplify to a great extent, may thus be contrasted with what, for want of a better word, be called the Ātman-centric perspective which finds its most persistent and effective exemplification in what is known as Hindu civilization and culture. The two perspectives are, basically, two ways of conceiving society and each of them once formulated and accepted by a significant minority tends to shape the particular society in that direction also. The two perspectives, to the extent that they get actualized, give rise in their turn

to two fundamental predicaments which may also respectively be called the socio-centric and the Ātman-centric predicaments.

The relation of the foundational guilt-consciousness as exemplified in the Christian and Marxist variations of the Western culture to the socio-centric predicament, though logically understandable, has yet been found to be empirically contingent. The Greek, Judaic and Islamic cultures, though essentially socio-centric in their nature, do not display any essential guilt-consciousness according to those who have closely studied them. It is supposed to be impossible for a person to be a real Muslim without being the member of a Muslim community. If Plato is to be believed, Socrates refused to get out of the prison even when he was convinced that his imprisonment was unjust and that there was a danger to his life just because it might endanger the laws of the society of which he was a member and on which, according to him, it ultimately rested. The Jews, of course, believe themselves to be a chosen race and though one can become a Jew, Judaism as a religion is not very missionary in character.

The Greeks were, of course, pagans. But Judaism and Islam both subscribe to the Old Testament and thus to the doctrine of Original Sin which implicates all humanity in a collective guilt. It seems surprising, therefore, that they do not suffer from the sense of guilt to the same extent as the Christians. The reasons for such a state of affairs, if it actually obtains, need investigation. But it is not our task to undertake that investigation here. Whatever be the internal differences between these various cultures, they are all basically socio-centric in character. The Christian and the Communist among them have carried the logic to its extreme and thus exposed it to the predicaments and paradoxes which are only half-hidden in the other traditions. But the Christian still has a soul which, though essentially involved with others, is yet supposed to have an

independent relation to God through the Church which ensures it at least some sort of privacy and individuality which is missing in the Communist vision. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* is not so much an exercise in fictitious imagination as the complete working out of the logic of the socio-centric view about man and society. The completely secularized view of man as a social animal divested of all the trappings of a transcendental faith reduces man essentially to what society *makes* him to be and, at another level, to what it *permits* him to be.

As against this, in the other perspective, man is seen basically as a transcendent being. His sociality is only an accidental feature which no more defines him than, say, his erect posture. He is the son of God or, perhaps, the God himself. When Aristotle said that outside society, one is either a God or a beast, he was not giving alternatives which would create any dilemma for the Ātman-centric thinker. Man is obviously not a beast and if sociality is to be accidental then he must be a god and so he is in spite of all appearances to the contrary. Parenthetically, it may be added that some animals are supposed to be essentially social; for example, the ants and the bees.

However it be, society is ultimately secondary in this perspective. Man is essentially a-social or rather trans-social in nature. The relationship with the other which is the heart of sociality is, thus, secondary also. The issue, thus, is not between what Martin Buber in his felicitous phrase has called the "I-thou" and the "I-it" relationships. Rather, it is between these two on the one side and what can perhaps only be called the "I-I" relationship. The two "I's" in the equation are at one level, the empirical and the transcendental self, the two birds which the *Upaniṣads* refer to. At another level, they may be conceived as referring to self-as-the-subject and the self-as-the-object and the relationship between the two. At

still another level, the problem may be posed in terms of the *identity* of a being which is essentially conscious or, rather, the identity of consciousness itself. But in whatever way we conceive it and the three are closely related to each other, the central focus remains on the relation of the Self with itself and not with what constitutes the other.

With the devaluation of the relation to the other, the whole realm of the moral, which is essentially constituted through the consciousness of one's obligations to others, gets devalued also. At best, it is seen as a *means* for the realization of the higher and the deeper obligation to one's own Self. At worst, it is seen as a hindrance in the way of the realization of one's obligation to one's own Self. Society, in an equivalent manner, is seen either as a facilitating instrument for the pursuit of man's a-social or trans-social ends or as an obstruction to the realization of one's transcendence from an essentially other-centred or socio-centric consciousness. The other, even when he happens to be a person, is, after all, an object who takes one away from one's own Self. At the lower egoistic level, this is known to everybody, but that this is so at the higher Ātman-centric level also is the subject of active awareness only among a few. The conflict between the egoistic and the moral consciousness is a common property among all who have achieved any level of self-conscious awareness at all. But the conflict between the moral and the spiritual consciousness is known only to those who have heard the call of the transcendent spirit. Buddha leaving his wife, child and kingdom may be taken as the paradigmatic example of such a situation. The world of social, political and familial obligations is given up at the call of something which the individual cannot quite clearly formulate even to himself. What is clear is the dissatisfaction which one has with one's own state of affairs and not what one actually wants or what one is going to get by the giving up of such obligations.

The contrast between the moral and the spiritual has been effectively drawn in the context of the Western tradition by Kierkegaard. Abraham sacrificing his son at the command of God is given as the classic example of such a conflict. But, at least two things should be noted in respect of this example. First, the conflict here is not between one's obligation to others and the obligation to one's own self. Instead, it is between obligations to others; the 'others' being in this case 'son' and 'God' respectively. The example, therefore, does not, as Kierkegaard claims, illustrate "the suspension of the ethical" but remains within the domain of the ethical itself. Secondly, the concept of the 'spiritual' reflected in this example would seem very strange to any one steeped in the Hindu tradition. The 'spiritual' basically concerns a state of one's own being and even where it denotes relation to God or a supreme being, the relation conceived is one of contemplation rather than obedience, submission and action.

In a sense, even Buddha's example has elements which would be deviant from the ideally constructible Hindu example for such a situation. In the traditional story, Buddha is led to renounce the worldly obligations by the sight of something outside his own self. It is the sight of suffering, old age and death which makes him leave the world and not any dissatisfaction with his own psychically lived life. The Hindu, on the other hand, would or at least should have renounced not because of any concern with the specific condition of some *other* human being but because of some condition of his own life. Similarly, Buddha's return to save the suffering humanity, to show it the way and to set in motion the wheel of *dharma* is non-Hindu in character. So also is the vow of seeking refuge in the religious community called the *sangh*. It may, perhaps, have been these features of Buddhism which did not appeal to the traditional Hindu psyche and thus led to its complete elimination from the land of its birth.

Society, in the Ātman-centric perspective, therefore, is seen only as a midway term of thought and not as the last term in terms of which everything else is to be understood and justified. It does help a person to get away from his ego-centred consciousness which is always concerned with the satisfaction of petty personal desires. As against this, one moves towards an awareness of obligations to others and towards the sustaining of those institutional mechanisms which make human living possible. This is the realm which is classically denoted by the concept of *dharma* in Hindu thought. This is the moral realm *par excellence*, the realm which is constituted by the notion of 'debt' or 'the *owing* of an obligation to others'. The 'others', in the Hindu tradition, includes not only persons, but ancestors, gods, plants, animals, earth, sky and so forth. The concept is wide enough to include all realms where the 'other' happens to be an empirical 'other' with whom one can enter into a relationship.

But, however important, it is rooted basically in man's empiricality and thus has to be transcended through an essential *withdrawal* and detachment from others and society. The road is through society, but it does not end there as in the other perspective. Also, if one can circumvent it in the sense that one is not naturally ego-centred and that the pull of the Transcendent is too great for one's engaging in the fulfilment of the usual obligations to others, then there is nothing wrong in one's doing so. To put it in another way, one need not take the road if one can jump it or if there are other short-cuts available to reach the other side of the road. In any case, society is not to be the object of perpetual concern in the sense that man's ultimate realization is not to be through it but apart from it. The concern, therefore, if any, has to be only minimal in character.

The Hindu hierarchy of values, specially in the Ātman-centric tradition, devalues thus the realm of the social and the

moral. Along with it goes the devaluation of the objective and the external in the usual sense of the terms. The ranking is most pithily expressed in the classical saying that "For the sake of the Transcendent Self, One should give up the whole world" (*Ātmārthe prithvīṁ tyajet*). The world obviously means the whole network of social, moral and political obligations as well as the world of things which is instrumental to the satisfaction of one's biological needs. This whole world, it is recommended, ought to be given up for the sake of the Transcendent Self about which it is as meaningless to say that it is mine as that it is someone else's. The admonition, further, in the classical saying, comes at the end of a series of 'oughts', which suggest that the obligations to a lesser whole such as the family, clan or village are to be sacrificed for the sake of a wider and higher totality such as the country or the whole of humanity itself. The obvious implication, therefore, is that the Transcendent Self is not only the highest but also the widest in the sense that it is basically not characterizable in terms of spatial or temporal characteristics at all.

The concern for the human other which is the heart of the moral situation thus gets minimized into leaving the other to work out his own fate or to help him only to the extent he can be made to realize his own transcendence also. The idea of *avatāra* in Hinduism and the ideal of *bodhisattva* in Buddhism seem obvious exceptions to what we have been trying to characterize as the Ātman-centric tradition in India. Similarly, the *bhakti* tradition is different from the conception of *mokṣa* which is not that of a community of selves as in Christianity or Islam. There may, perhaps, be some influence of Christianity and Islamic Sufism in the rise of these conceptions, though an independent, indigenous origin need not be entirely discounted either. Contacts with Greek culture and the middle eastern religions occurred very early in the growth of Hindu civilization and an early sect of Christianity reached the southern shores of

India much earlier than the *Alvāras* who have been considered the early precursors of the devotional movement that later swept most of northern and eastern India. Also, there is no reason why every form that the human spirit has taken in its religious quest may not be found in every long-enduring historical culture in some recessive form or another. Whatever be the explanation of those strands of Hindu culture which, however grudgingly, accept the concept of a community of selves in essential interrelation either with one another or with God, the eloquent fact remains that they are felt by all to be *in need of* some explanation or other. If it would have been the normal and the natural strand, no such need would have been felt nor would any explanation have been called for. But it is only because the most significant, distinctive and dominant trend of Hindu thought has turned away in the other direction that we feel the need of such explanations. Against both the Chinese and the Greek assertions during what Jaspers has called "the Axial Age of human history", the Indian asserted the essential a-sociality and trans-sociality of man. Translated into spiritual terms, it was the essential relatedness of the Self to itself as in *Sāṅkhya* or its being bereft of even this relation as in *Advaita Vedānta* that was the central assertion. The attempts at relatedness to God as in the *bhakti* schools or to *shakti* as in the *tantras* did try to move towards some sort of relatedness to the other, but this too was conceived in terms of the enjoyment of a state of consciousness-in-relationship which was hardly conducive to the growth of moral consciousness leading to action in terms of *obligations* to the other. God himself became a person with whom an affective-emotional relation was to be cultivated and enjoyed and not someone from whom commands and laws emanated.

The devaluation and relegation to a secondary place of man's relationship to the embodied other with all its attendant obligations in the world of action is bound to result in a

weakening of society, especially in its encounter with others which are not so oriented. Just as, on another plane, if people get too much occupied with achieving states of hedonic or aesthetic consciousness, the society grows progressively incapable of meeting challenges from others which are more socio-centred and extrovert in nature. The Ātman-centricity leads a people's attention away from an active concern with society and its betterment as much as the consciousness which is centred on the enjoyment of its own hedonic or aesthetic states. When a society's best brains are concerned with the pursuit of something which is essentially a-social or trans-social and which requires an active withdrawal from the institutions that sustain it, then the road is prepared for the inevitable take-over either by those who are interested only in their own gain or by those who are bent on *transforming* the world in the image of their own good. The immoralists from within and the messiahs from without rule the social realm alternately after the Ātman-centricists have withdrawn into their own pursuit of the trans-social reality.

There is a sort of Gresham's law in human affairs which may be formulated in terms of the tendency of evil to drive out the good. It is not only the bad money that drives out the good, but also bad people who tend to drive out the good. The intrinsically good have a natural impulse to withdraw from the social world, as the most meaningful things are usually realized outside it. If the impulse gets the sanction and the support of a whole culture behind it, then the countervailing forces give way and we have the spectacle of a society internally governed by the hedonism of the *kāma-sūtras* and the a-moralism of the *arth-śāstras*. After that it does not take too long for it to be conquered, if there are any extrovert and socio-centric people around.

The two predicaments, then, derive from the two ways in which the relation between society and individual can be

conceived. Each of the ways affects profoundly the direction in which a society, which conceives of itself in that way, moves and develops. Each in its own turn casts a dark shadow which grows larger and thicker and longer, the more it develops nearer the actualization of the way it conceives itself to be.

To be aware of the predicaments, however, is to feel the challenge of avoiding them, if possible. Is it really possible to avoid them, even if we desire to do so ? Perhaps, the shadow would always be with us; perhaps, the negative is woven into the very structure of life. But even if this were so, it would equally remain a fact that the belief in the possibility of getting rid of the shadow is presupposed by all human action in some form or other. Yet, human action, in its own turn, is profoundly influenced by the way we conceive human reality to be. The way we think about action and the place it occupies or rather ought to occupy in individual and social life affects profoundly the way individuals and societies seek or turn away from action. A reflection on action and a delineation of its different dimensions and typal directions is, thus, a necessary step in our quest for avoiding the shadow, if possible.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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REFLECTION ON ACTION

Action is the pivot around which revolves the dialectic of the ideal and the actual. The conception that man entertains of himself and his society influences and shapes the human and the social reality through action which attempts to bridge the gap, if any, between the way they are conceived and the way they are found to be. When Plato identified idea at its highest level with the Idea of Good, he was moved by the profound intuition that the inevitable divorce between the actual and the conceptual turns, when concerned with man and society, into the divorce between the actual and the ideal. In the realm of nature, the divorce appears between the mathematical and the perceptual, but never takes the shape of a valuational demand to close the hiatus as far as possible. We still remain in the realm of quantity and the demand, if there be any, is only for an approximation for purposes of calculation. In the case of man and society, on the other hand, the discrepancy between the concept and the actual is felt as that which *ought* not to be. There is something *wrong* in being what one ought not to be and thus there is felt a *moral* imperative to approximate what one conceives as the *real* nature of himself and society.

The inevitable discrepancy between the way one *conceives* the nature of man and society and the way one finds them in actual fact is, it should be remembered, not confined to any particular conception only. Whatever be the conception, whether socio-centric or Ātman-centric or any other, one is bound to find the individual and social reality deviating from it in some way or other. The reason for this may perhaps be said to lie in the fact that the concept has always more sharply defined boundaries than any actuality that we can ever

meet with in experience. The concept is, in a sense, an abstraction, a creature of our own definition and thus shorn of all the irrelevancies that we do not want in it. On the other hand, getting rid of what we do not want in the realm of the actual is almost like the labours of Sisyphus, doomed to perennial frustration. A perpetual action is needed to ward off the intrusion of the hostile and the irrelevant, but the action undertaken may itself bring into being consequences which go counter to what one has been trying to achieve.

Action – conscious, willed action – is thus a necessity. But what type of action and for what purpose are questions that demand an answer? A reflection on action thus is a supreme desideratum, but the reflection itself would reveal the diverse conceptions that man holds of himself and, therefore, of action also. The reflection on action basically revolves around the way we conceive consciousness to be. Shall we conceive it as an instrument for the achievement of ends outside itself? Or, shall we conceive it as something substantial, intrinsic and worth while in itself? Is it merely an epiphenomenon or just an instrument for the achievement of bio-social ends or itself the end of all human action? Which shall we give primacy to: Being or Doing? Shall we conceive of Being itself as a centre of force and activity, something on the pattern of the Tantric idea of *shakti*? Or, shall we conceive of it as consciousness that is calm and stilled, something mirror-like which just *is* and is aware of itself in joy and happiness and bliss?

The debate around action is pretty old in Hinduism. The traditional terms were *karma* and *jñāna*, though their translation as action and knowledge is in many respects misleading. *Karma*, at least in the first stage of the debate, meant primarily ritual action enjoined in the *Vedas*. The orthodox Brahmans upheld their primacy and the *Mīmāṁsakas* argued for them at the philosophical level. *Jñāna*, on the other hand, meant not all knowledge, but only the knowledge about the

Self. The debate was usually carried on in the context of *mokṣa* or absolute release from the possibility of all suffering. Later, in the *Gītā*, the meaning of *karma* is enlarged to include almost all action. The *bhakti* interpretation, however, reasserts the traditional ritualistic notion of *karma*, though in a new way.

Except for the brief interlude of the *Gītā* and the radically different perspective of the *Mahābhārata*, the notion of action as ritual dominates Hindu thought. The reason for this is not far to seek since, in a certain perspective, all action is a sign of insufficiency except that which is just play or sheer sport. This also accounts for the doctrine of *līlā* in Hindu thought. Now ritual action is, of course, not play or sport, but it in another way seeks to close the circle of action and makes it self-sufficient. Normally, action leads one out of oneself and involves one in an unending chain of causality leaving one at the mercy of persons, forces and factors over which one has little control, if any. The ritualization of action, however, makes one escape from this unending dependence and involvement into a universe which is well-ordered, self-enclosed and dependent on one's own self to a substantial degree.

The ritual itself may be conceived of as an individual or a collective affair. The collective ritual would obviously involve a far greater dependence on others than the one which depends completely on a single individual. If the search be, then, for self-sufficiency and for taking the sting out of action and make it as innocuous as possible, then a trend from collective to individual ritual may safely be expected to be found in the evolution of Hindu thought and practice in this respect. Even where ostensibly the trend may seem in the opposite direction as in the collective *kīrtan*-cult of the *Chaitanya* school of devotional Hinduism or in the collective meditation encouraged by some recent innovators in Hinduism, the collective character is both secondary and very, very partial in nature. Its secondary character is revealed by the fact that it is not what is

ultimately to be realized by the seeker. Both the devotion and the meditation are ultimately individual in nature and are to be pursued by the individual in his Aloneness where either there is no other or the other just happens to be the Lord only. The recommendation to seek within a group is only a concession to human weakness and it is quite clearly realized from the very beginning that it is only provisional in nature. Also, if someone can do without it, he ought to do so. There is not only no harm in not pursuing collective forms of devotion and meditation, but being able to do it alone and on one's own is taken as a positive sign of spiritual maturity and a subject of great approbation.

Action outside the context of play and ritual is, however, another matter. It, in the first place, makes one dependent on others as most of the ends we want to achieve through action can hardly be achieved by the effort of a single man alone. This dependence makes man social in the sense that he comes to realize more and more the essential interdependence of all men upon one another. This leads to a sense of community, the sense of belonging to a larger whole but only on the condition that others cooperate in the facilitation of what one wants to achieve. The others, however, may not always facilitate. Instead, they may obstruct, oppose and stand in the way of the fulfilment of the goals or ends one has set for oneself. More often than not, the obstruction from others is the rule rather than the exception. The only alternatives in such a situation are either to withdraw and give up seeking what one wanted or to coerce or cajole the persons who oppose and obstruct the realization of one's ends. In the first case, there is a withdrawal from action; while in the second, there is obvious violation of the 'otherness' of the other and the use of him as an instrument to one's own purposes. It is thus that action which ostensibly was undertaken for the securing of moral ends turns into the perpetration of immorality.

The involvement in action as essentially leading to an involvement in the violation of morality may be comprehended further if we keep in mind the institutional context of most action which seeks the achievement of any external end that is complicated or complex to the least degree. Firstly, membership of an institution usually involves the liability to be answerable for actions which one considers wrong in one's own judgment. A minimum amount of hypocrisy seems inevitable when one acts as a member of a family, society or nation. If to behave hypocritically, then, be to act immorally, there would seem but little hope of escaping from a necessary involvement in evil. Secondly, in an institutional context one is bound to be held responsible for what one has not done for the simple reason that others *identify* oneself with the group which has undertaken the action. Thus, even when one regards a certain action as wrong and even when one has not been a party to doing it, one may consider oneself responsible for it from the fact that everybody else regards one as such. Conversely, because of the collective nature of the decisions arrived at they assume such an impersonal and annonymous character that no one seems to feel basically responsible for them. The decision-making process in any group is of such a diffuse character that it is always difficult to pinpoint responsibility on any one person, except in a formal sense. Even in those cases where the decision-making authority is not collective but is vested in some single person such as a monarch or a dictator, the decision is always the result of so many varying pressures that it is hardly felt to be one's own.

The twofold character of action in an institutional context, though seemingly opposed to each other, leads in the same direction. The forced ascription of responsibility for what one oneself considers as wrong and the slow erosion of individual responsibility in the context of collective decision lead almost inevitably to the substitution of man by the mask, so aptly

epitomized in the concept of 'role' which is so pivotal to the socio-centric view of man. A role has to be *played*, a mask has to be *assumed* and in the playing and the assuming the integral self is lost and man becomes *nothing* but the mask he assumes or the role that he plays. Man becomes an *actor* in the literal sense of the word and his reality is reduced to only what the others apprehend of him. Off the stage, away from the footlights, he is Nobody, and that is what his reality is in himself apart from the others.

Besides the dependence on others and the paradoxes of responsibility which most action concerned with the realization of states of affairs outside oneself generates, there is also the involvement in causality and time which are its almost inevitable concomitants also. Action is primarily the initiating of a causal chain which stretches indefinitely in all directions. It weaves a web in which one gets caught oneself. One has to *wait* for events to happen and if one is concerned with causation, time is bound to be one's master. Further, one becomes only a link in the chain that stretches from the past to the future. Historicity begins to define one's being and one is enmeshed in causality, time, society and history. This is the great socio-centric chain of which Hindu thought has not been entirely unaware. In its concepts of forefathers, rebirth, *karma* and caste it has embodied this way of looking at man, though it has always treated it as secondary and ultimately of the nature of ignorance and bondage rather than as that which defines his essential nature. The temporality, sociality and historicity in which man begins to be involved if he pursues what I have elsewhere[1] called "the active values" in contrast to what may be called "the contemplative values" which are concerned primarily with the achievement of one's own state of being or consciousness, results gradually and inevitably in man's coming to conceive of himself essentially in those terms also.

The pursuit of active values and the resultant involvement in action have one other feature which deserves notice especially in the context of Ātman-centric reflection on action which at least one predominant trend of Hindu thought pursued to its logical extreme. If one's end be the attainment of a state of consciousness, undisturbed by anything outside oneself, then engagement in the pursuit of action for the realization of external values is almost the surest way of defeating one's purpose. Nothing, perhaps, is a greater disturber of one's consciousness than action for the achievement of an external end. *Tṛṣnā* or desire, the Hindu saw, as the root of all suffering and also as the root of all action. Action and suffering, thus, became inevitably interlinked in Hindu thought and the latter was seen as a necessary consequence of the former. The *Gītā*'s importance in this context lies in breaking the impasse created by this inevitable linkage between desire, action and suffering. It conceived of an action which was not rooted in desire and which, therefore, would not lead to suffering.

The importance of the *Gītā*'s reflection on action can hardly be understood or appreciated except in the light of the great debate which engaged the Indian mind for centuries regarding this subject. The first round of the debate was between the votaries of ritualistic action called *yajna* or sacrifice and those who, under the impact of the *śramaṇa* criticism, were trying to give a more symbolic interpretation to the concept of sacrifice. The *Upaniṣads* are a classic expression of this stage of the debate concerning action. The *śramaṇa* critique found its focal expression in Buddhism and Jainism. The former propounded the doctrine of desire as the root of action and suffering, while the latter treated *karma* as a subtle material envelope which one weaves out of one's actions and which binds oneself in its meshes. The *Gītā* came at this stage and argued for the possibility of a type of action whose roots do not lie in desire and which, therefore, could not lead to suffering. But the

argument of the *Gītā* ran in a double direction and it did not quite see that the directions could possibly be opposed to each other. One direction was the search for a type of action whose doing would not produce any *consequences* on the mind or psyche of the person who did it. This is the direction of the action done without regard to the fruits and which, therefore, does not disturb consciousness in any significant sense of the term. The other direction lies in sterilizing action through disconnecting it from egoistic desire and pursuing it for the sake of the Lord or for the promotion and perpetuation of *dharma*, that is, the good or perhaps which could better be designated by what Plato meant by justice.

The two directions obviously concern themselves with meeting the two radical defects discovered in all action by the *śramaṇa* critique already referred to. One was the fact that it sprang from egoistic desire and thus led the self into bondage in a twofold manner. The first was the dependence on something *outside itself* for its own satisfaction and fulfilment. The second was the weaving of a psychic web in which one got enmeshed and caught through what are usually called *saṁskāras* or habits, not so much of action as of thought and feeling. It is this latter character of *saṁskāra* or habit-formation which is the ground of the apparently shocking assertion in Hindu tradition that good actions also bind and thus ultimately have to be given up and transcended. The idea of transcending all the *guṇas*, including *sattva*, which is supposed to be the cause of good actions thus comes into being. The *Gītā* itself talks of *nistraigunya* in this connection.

The other defect which the *śramaṇa* critique found in action was its character of disturbing the mind which engaged in it. In action, the mind is somehow *concerned* with something outside itself in such a manner that it has no peace of its own. Not merely this, but the logic of action seems to be such that it takes one farther and farther away from the situation

where one could even possibly enjoy a peaceful, undisturbed consciousness which is calm and joyous in itself. The contemplative moments grow fewer and fewer and gradually the mind loses its capacity to be silent and still. There is not only no time 'to stand and stare', but even if one has, one can only fidget and worry and think of the multitudinous tasks that are awaiting to be done. One is not free of them even in one's dreams and one seems to go to bed with them, for the moment one awakes one finds them there.

This aspect of action gets a deeper twist, if the action happens to be moral action. Once one's consciousness gets filled with the claims of others, there is no respite, no moment of release, no joy even in the little joys of life. The humanity is vast and its sufferings immense and one has to cultivate blindness and deafness that one may not see or hear what goes on around. There has to be a certain moral callousness, if one is to enjoy even one moment in life. Do not the prophets make us all feel guilty and hasn't everybody wondered at the moral insensitivity of everybody else ?

However, if the action is moral, it has to be *concerned* with the fruits of one's action. *Indifference* in such a context is the sign of immorality and it does not matter at all if such a concern disturbs one's equanimity of being or consciousness. Rather, one *ought* to be disturbed, and if one is not so disturbed at the suffering of others, then one is not a human being. The development of a thick-skinned consciousness which is not disturbed by what it ought to be disturbed is, in the moral perspective, not a sign of development but of dehumanization. The *Gītā* skirts past this basic conflict and recommends both the non-egoistic action for the sake of the Lord or the *dharma* and the unmotivated action which is not rooted in the desire for any consequence and thus is indifferent to any and all fruits whatsoever as the solution for the problem of action. Action done for the sake of the Lord or for the maintenance of

dharma, however, is action that is done *for* the sake of specific consequences or purposes. It *is* rooted in a motivation which is external to the self and lies in the consequence for which the action is undertaken. The *hetu* or the reason in such a case, therefore, is the *karma-phala* or the wished for consequences of an action for the sake of which it is done. The Lord has to be pleased or propitiated; the *dharma* has to be re-established or maintained or strengthened.

The *Gītā* is supposed to be a part of the *Mahābhārata* and the person who propounds his philosophy of action in it is also the hero or, at least, one of the great heroes of the epic. His actual behaviour, therefore, as portrayed in the epic may be expected to throw some light on the philosophy that he preached in this semi-philosophical work. Does Krishna behave as if he had no desire for the fruits of action ? Does he really act as if all consequences were *equally* welcome to him ? Were victory and defeat *equally* indifferent alternatives to him ? To ask these questions is to answer them. The great preacher of non-attachment and indifference to the fruits of action behaved as if the victory in battle was all that mattered to him, all that he cared for. The *Pāndavas* had to win; the *Kauravas* had to be defeated. If rules had to be violated, falsehood had to be resorted to, deceit practised, it all was supremely justified for it led to victory. If Krishna's behaviour in the battle of the Mahābhārata is seen as a commentary on the *Gītā*, then one can only say that the preacher did not practise what he preached or that he did not preach what he practised.

Such a situation, obviously, is not rare among those who preach about how to live or behave. Rather, it is the rule instead of being the exception. It may be held that we should concern ourselves more with what a person propounds than what he does. But there is a philosophy which is implicitly propounded in one's actions. Krishna is propounding what is to be done in the case of a righteous battle (*dharma-yuddha*)

which is enjoined *after* all means for avoiding it have been explored and exhausted, save one of abject and unrighteous surrender. In such a situation, Krishna seems to be saying, one has to fight not just for the sake of fighting but in order to win. The unrighteous have to be defeated; the *Ātatāyī* has to be killed. There is this trend of thought also in what may be called the epic tradition in Hinduism. The concept of *avatāra* in which the Lord himself descends on earth to rid it of all the *rākṣasas*, that is, the unrighteous seems to belong to this tradition.

It may be urged that there is no reason to assume that Krishna who preached the *Gītā* and the Krishna who acted in the *Mahābhārata* is the same person. They may very well be two different persons with the same name and hence the problem of explaining the discrepancies between the precept and the practice does not arise. On the same grounds, it may be urged that to interpret the *Gītā* in the light of Krishna's action in the *Mahābhārata* would be basically wrong, as the two may not be the same person at all. However it be, one thing remains unaffected by all these possibilities and that is the existence of a tradition exemplified in the epics which propagated the ideal of the fight against injustice and evil, a fight that was to be won by all the means at one's disposal including guile, deceit and falsehood.

The secondary character of this tradition, however, is revealed not only by the fact that the *Gītā* assumed a primacy over the *Mahābhārata* in traditional thought about action but that in both the epics it is reserved for God alone to assume the burden of slaying the unrighteous and rid the earth of evil. Human beings are supposed only to pray and invoke, lament and suffer till the Lord hears their prayer and accedes to their request. Further, even with respect to the *Gītā*, the idea of action for the maintenance of *dharma* came gradually to be ignored and the emphasis laid on the action done for the sake of the Lord or

action which is done without attachment to the fruits of action. This, in a deep sense, was a return to ritualistic action purified of even that taint of purpose or end which motivated the performer of Vedic sacrifices. The latter were, after all, done for the sake of a specific end or purpose which the person who did the ritual or for whom it was done wanted to achieve. The *Gītā* removes this concern for purpose completely and thus emasculates action at its very roots. The concept of *dharma* recedes and what remains is either the unattached, unaffected consciousness of *sāṁkhya* or the devotional consciousness filled with the awareness and joy of the Lord. Both develop into the *advaitic* and devotional schools of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (affective relationship with the Lord). In parentheses, it may be said that the difference between *sāṁkhya* and *Advaita Vēdānta*, though great in ontological terms, is little as far as spiritual realization is concerned. The difference, in *advaitic* terms, may be designated as that between *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta samādhi*. At least logically, the *sāṁkhyan puruṣa* in the state of *kaivalya* or liberation ought to be aware of *prakṛti* and also of its complete separation from itself, though there are interpreters of *sāṁkhya* who contend that in the ultimate state of disembodied liberation the *puruṣa* is not aware of *prakṛti*, as all object-awareness is mediated through *buddhi* or discriminatory intelligence.[2]

The revolutionary, active, goal-oriented interpretation of the *Gītā* was reserved for twentieth-century India. Even here there was a significant difference between the interpretations of the terrorists in Bengal and elsewhere and of Gandhi who is perhaps the only example in the world history of a person who in spite of the fact that his primary aim was the attainment of a state of consciousness which was undisturbed by anything outside itself, yet engaged in a socio-political activity of the most disturbing kind. The activity of both, however, was goal-oriented and was in this respect radically different from the

usual interpretations of indifference and non-attachment to the consequences of action supposedly enjoined by the *Gītā*.

However, whatever be one's interpretation of the millennia-long tradition of Hindu thought on this matter, it seems certain that there are two major directions of human seeking and that the direction which involves externally-oriented action essentially involves one also inevitably in causality, time, society and history. One has to mortgage oneself to others and to the future and to feel responsible for what one has not done and to feel helpless in the face of the immensity of time and the multitudinous others that are really 'others'. The search for freedom, then, may take one away from all these and may see externally-oriented action as one's main enemy. It may be seen as both the consequence and the cause of one's bondage to the temporal and causal chain which binds one to the wheel that eternally rolls on. It may be felt that History and Time cannot be overcome through action and that Freedom cannot be won through it either.

But freedom itself may be conceived in diverse ways and each of the conceptions would tend to affect the individual or society which conceives it in that way in a certain direction. The freedom conceived would be attempted to be actualized and actions and institutions would be moulded and judged in its light. Freedom is not all of a piece and before we proceed forward, we may as well become aware of its diverse forms and the various perspectives under which it can be conceived.

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PERSPECTIVES OF FREEDOM

Freedom is a word resonant with many meanings. It is one thing which perhaps everybody wants and yet the very fact that everybody wants it makes it impossible that each one gets it to the extent he wants it. The problem, at least at one level, is not so much of freedom as of freedoms. One's freedom seems to be essentially limited by the freedom of others and thus nobody can be free, for each is limited by the other. This limitation, it should be noted, is far more intrinsic than the usual limitations pointed out with respect to the enjoyment of goods and services which everyone cannot have because there are not sufficient to go around. The limitation here is a function of relative finitude which can possibly be overcome. The limitation on freedom arises, however, by the very fact of the multiplicity of persons in interaction. The fact that there *is* another centre of freedom with whom one is in some sort of an active inter-relationship leads essentially to the limitation of one's freedom. The only way in which it could possibly be avoided at this plane is by the postulation of either there being only one centre of freedom or of denying any interaction between them, if there happen to be more than one such centres. Both the alternatives seem difficult of postulation even at the logical level. There seems no intrinsic reason why, if there is a centre of freedom (whatever may be meant by that phrase ?), there should only be one and never more than one. Similarly, if there are more than one such centres, the *possibility* of interaction between them can never be denied. There seems, thus, an inevitability about the fact that the problem of freedom may only be resolved by giving up the dream of absolute freedom and accepting the limitation of one freedom by another. The freedom of each is

limited by the freedom of everyone else and in this lies the essence of the human situation.

Is this seeming inevitability really inevitable? The Hindu thought over more than two millennia may be seen from one angle as an attempt to seek the answer to this question. Is absolute freedom not possible in a situation where there are not only natural constraints but multiple centres of freedom? The Faustian quest for freedom and power has been supposed to be a specific characteristic of the Western man and his culture. But it has rarely been noted that the Hindu quest is also for infinite freedom and power, though conceived in a different sense. The extroverted Faustian seeking of Western man can only be realized through the annihilation of the freedom of all others except oneself. And if it be accepted that freedom in its foundations is unannihilable in a certain sense, then the Faustian seeking is intrinsically impossible of realization, for it is a contradiction-in-terms. The seeking for infinite freedom and power has, therefore, to be conceived in such a way that its realization in absolute terms by one person does not conflict with its equal realization in absolute terms by another. This is the inward Faustian Odyssey of the Hindu spirit over the ages and it is perhaps in its terms alone that its most significant striving and contribution may be understood and articulated.

Freedom itself, then, may be conceived in diverse and different ways. The difference in conceptions would affect the striving of individuals and societies to realize and actualize it in the way they have conceived it to be. The difference here, however, lies not so much in the nature of the actual that is attempted to be conceived and whose nature is such that the way we conceive it affects the way we tend to discover it to be. Rather, it leans more, in a significant way, in the direction of what is conceived to be desirable and which thus affects, shapes and moulds the actual in a certain way. The way in which the actual is affected through the cognitive activity of

conceiving its real nature is to be distinguished from the way it is affected by the conceiving of the desirable through the imaginative faculty of man. The former is primarily confined to the human reality in its predominantly conscious aspects, while the latter is applicable to all reality, human or non-human, physical or non-physical.

The thinking about freedom has a long tradition both in India and the West. But in the West, somehow, freedom has always been thought of in relation to action, whether it be the action which is not done under constraint of anyone else or action which is in accordance with an external (law) or internal (moral) or internal-external norm. The action may even be conceived apart from these norms, whether internal or external or both, and thought of in terms of its seeking the satisfaction of one's needs and desires with or without reference to any norm whatsoever. However it be conceived, freedom in the West seems to have been usually thought of and discussed in terms of action. There is, of course, a strand of thought in the West which recognizes that 'action' is too much dependent on external factors to be considered as the heartland of freedom. What one is actually able to do depends not only on other human beings but also on the state of one's psychophysical organism. If freedom, then, is to depend solely on oneself, it cannot be considered as centring in action but rather in 'willing' or even in 'intention'. The famous dictum of Kant that nothing in the world can be called good without qualification except a Good Will derives, most probably, from such considerations. The Stoics are the other great group in the Western tradition who have envisaged freedom in terms of 'willing' rather than action. As Mortimer Adler writes: "They indicate that such freedom is held, not in relation to the power or wills of other men, nor in relation to the impact of physical forces; but rather in the relation of a man's own will or mind to forces within himself, over which he has the requisite power.

Accordingly it consists in being able *to will as we ought*, whether or not external circumstances permit us *to do as we will* ".[1]

This is perhaps the farthest that Western thought has gone in the direction of conceiving freedom as an internal state unrelated to anything outside itself. But even here freedom, though unrelated to society and specific circumstances, is conceived of in terms of *willing according to a norm*. It is still essentially conceived of in relation to a *possible* action. Fundamentally, both 'will' and 'intention' are concerned with the achievement of some state of affairs relating to persons, situations or things. It is only an accident that what is willed or intended does not take the form of overt action, just as it is an accident whether the action, even when performed, achieves the end for which it was undertaken. However, in both cases, freedom is conceived of in relation to something external which is sought or desired to be achieved.

As against this, the Indian conceives of freedom in a totally different way. For him, freedom has got nothing to do with action. It is rather a state of being or consciousness which, because it is free, is intrinsically joyous and blissful in its very nature. Suffering and bondage are closely related to each other; the former, in fact, is a sign of the presence of the latter. Complete liberation or *mokṣa*, therefore, is usually defined as that where even the possibility of suffering lapses or ceases. Ultimately for the Indian, suffering which is a sign of bondage is due to something wrong within the self itself. It is not a restriction or limitation imposed from the outside, but rather something within the self that is the cause of this bondage. The 'outside' in this case includes not merely others but one's own body and mind as well. Freedom, therefore, is not the release of a capacity from the restrictions imposed on its exercise through which one achieves the ends which one wants to achieve and which one could not achieve because of those restrictions. Rather, it is a state of continuously enjoyed consciousness which

does not seek any end whatsoever and whose freedom is an immediately felt reality expressing itself in the twin facts of being calm and joyous, on the one hand, and of being essentially unaffected by anything else, on the other. The latter fact does not mean that one becomes incapable of entering into any relation with the other but, rather, in K. C. Bhattacharyya's classic phrase, in relating oneself to the other without getting related.[2] The point obviously is that one's freedom is not affected in any way by the relationship with the other into which also one enters because of one's freedom.

The very concept of the other, however, may also be denied, and this has actually been done in a powerful school of Indian tradition. The possibility of the other is itself the possibility of bondage and thus unless this possibility be eliminated, freedom, it has been felt, will always be precarious and open to subversion. The *Advaitic* solution in terms of the ultimate unreality of the other seems to be motivated by some such feeling. In a certain sense, it comes close to the Faustian Ideal of the West where the other's freedom is subjugated or annihilated. However, the other must be there to be overpowered and conquered. The exercise of the Will presupposes the other and thus even in this respect the West tends to differentiate itself from India. The similarity, therefore, extends only so far as the affirmation of the one for the preservation of freedom is concerned. As far as the denial of the other is concerned, there is no such absolute denial in the West as in the *Advaitic* tradition. What is attempted to be denied there is not the reality or actuality of the other, but rather his freedom.

The *Advaitic* denial of the other, however, operates only on the plane of the transcendent where the modalities of space, time and causality become completely irrelevant. It is because of this that each person may realize this absolute for himself without in any way affecting the realization of the same absolute by others. In a certain sense, if for the realization of absolute

freedom the other has to be abolished, whether in his freedom alone or in his being also, the issue whether this is to be done at the empirical plane, or the transcendental plane, assumes tremendous importance. At the empirical plane, such a conception of freedom can translate itself into reality only by a perpetual process of each trying to subjugate the other to his own will as far as possible. The process is unending, but in its unendingness it will also generate the essential dialectics and development of history. Further, in so far as it is difficult for an individual to realize such an end on his own, he would have to ally and identify himself with groups and the conflict for supremacy on the historical stage will be more between groups than between individuals. The conflict between individuals will be within the groups rather than outside them. At the transcendental plane, on the other hand, the elimination of the other is to be achieved at the psychic level of conscious awareness. It has nothing to do with one's relationships to others at the empirical level except that they should be least possible in number and of such a nature as to avoid one's being disturbed by them. The *sāṁkhyans* tried to achieve this through a process of absolute de-identification with the other; the *Gītā* suggested a process of absolute non-attachment with the other to achieve this. The latter is perhaps only a consequence of the former spelled out clearly in the field of action. It was only the *advaitin* who argued that even the awareness of the other in any form is bound to affect one's freedom and hence if absolute freedom was to be achieved, the very consciousness of the other has to be got rid off and the possibility of its recurrence finally abolished. The dialectics of the achievement of freedom, however, in all cases was to be internal and psychical in nature.

The history of the two traditions, Western and Indian, supports to a great extent the different dialectics which the two concepts of freedom involve. It is not that Indian history does not show a struggle between groups for mastery or between

individuals for supremacy within a group, but this struggle, however fierce and prolonged, has seldom been ideologically oriented as in the West. It is a *meaningless* struggle in which nothing of essential value is gained or lost. What matters lies outside the struggle and cannot even be gained through it. There is not merely no epiphany in history but none *of*, or *through*, history also. No ultimate value lights the empirical struggle and it, thus, is relegated to a plane which is essentially neutral with respect to genuine values. Only the individual psyche is the seat of genuine value-conflicts, for in it alone can ultimate freedom be actualized.

The history of the West, on the other hand, is essentially temporal and empirical in character. Men and groups are the embodiment of values and their social conflicts, the conflicts between values and ideals of different kinds. Whether the vision be Jewish, Christian, Hegelian or Marxian, the historical process stands at the centre of this vision and the violence, struggle and suffering of men stand vindicated as meaningful in and through that context alone. The Indian tradition views it all as meaningless except as indicating some wrong knowledge, some ignorance of which it is an indication. The temporal life of man with all its suffering and struggles has no significance except to indicate that there is something basically wrong with us or with it or both.

It may be objected that I am ignoring the whole epic tradition of India in which it was the duty of a person to engage in the battle of righteousness and in which God has been conceived of as incarnating himself in response to this prayer of the people to rid the world of the reign of people who made it difficult to pursue the path of righteousness. The concept of *dharma-yuddha* elaborated in both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* may be thought of as a standing disconfirmation of much of the thesis I have been presenting in this lecture. Three things may be said in this connection. First, as I have already

pointed out in the previous lecture, the philosophic reflection that this problem of *dharma-yuddha* or righteous war gave rise to strikes at the very roots of all empirical action, whether for the establishment of *dharma* or anything else. Secondly, it may be interesting to note that the task of establishing the reign of righteousness was left to the Lord. The people could only suffer and pray; they perhaps were not supposed to fight the battle for righteousness themselves. Or, even if they could fight, they were not supposed to win the battle on their own without the express help of the Incarnate God on their side. Thirdly, even if it be agreed that the establishment of a righteous society was the duty of the people, specially *Kṣatriyas*, the people belonging to the warrior-caste, the concept of a righteous society basically was that which permitted or rather did not interfere with the pursuit of transcendental freedom.

The last point is important. The view of freedom as transcendental and a-social is not compromised at all. Rather, society itself is seen and judged in terms of its facilitation for the individual's pursuit of such freedom. Indian thought, in this context, both presupposed and specifically argued for the social *recognition* and facilitation of the pursuit of transcendental freedom on the part of the individual. *Mokṣa* was not only recognized as the highest value, but also as something whose seeker was to be held in the highest esteem and whose pursuit was to be facilitated by society with every means possible at its command. It was a-social or rather trans-social; but even though it was such, it was to be *recognized* by society as superior to itself. The *sannyāsī* had no *caste;* he was supposed to be virtually dead to all social obligations; the rites of death were performed on his initiation and yet he was venerated by all men-in-the-world including those that belonged to the highest of castes. Not only this, every man within the social nexus from the king downwards was expected to give him the facility required for his pursuit, that is, to leave him alone *institutionally*

and to provide him the bare wherewithal through which he could sustain the body for the transcendental pursuit. The recognition of the individual wandering mendicant who was theoretically dead to the society, its societal and familial obligations, and who was not even supposed to have a father or mother, brother or sister, as the highest was a recognition by the society of its own secondary character.

The *sannyāsī*, however, was merely a symbol for one who had given up the world for the pursuit of transcendental freedom. Basically, Hindu society granted that status to anybody who was pursuing or supposed to be pursuing that ideal. The great devotional saints of medieval India transcended their caste by becoming men of God, even though they did not become *sannyāsīs*. It may be interesting in this respect to note that the status of the temple priest in traditional India was never very high and that even the ritual-knowing Brahmin who was indispensable for most domestic ceremonies was held in lower spiritual esteem than the *sannyāsī*. India, as is well known, never developed an institutionalized church which unified within its system the monk and the priest. Nor did it generally unify the functions of the priest as the specialist in the ritual of temple worship and those of a specialist in the ritual of domestic ceremonies. The two were generally different and there was a great difference between the social status of the two types of persons. The tradition records an early conflict between the status of the Brahman priest who was a householder and a specialist in the technical rituals of various types of sacrifices and the wandering *sannyāsī* who rejected all obligations of being a householder and made fun of the ritual sacrifices of the Brahmans. The controversy between the Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa traditions, however, was resolved by the time of the *Upaniṣads* with the virtual incorporation of the *sannyāsa* as the fourth *āshrama* and *mokṣa* as the fourth *puruśārtha* into the main body of Brahmanical Hinduism. By the time the temples

came into being and the role of the worshipping priest became differentiated, the supremacy of *sannyāsī* was already established and there seems little evidence of any controversy on this score. Similarly, within the empirical-social nexus, the Brahman with his knowledge of the rituals relating to vitally crucial elements of the life-cycle reigned supreme and there seemed no question of disputing his status on the part of any social functionary, specially the temple priest.

However it be, the recognition by society of the a-social and trans-social pursuit of the *sannyāsī* as superior to any other that concerned empirical or social ends seems to have been a fact. Similarly, it seems to have been accepted that it was the supreme duty of society to facilitate such a pursuit. The only parallel that I can think of to such a situation in the Western tradition seems to relate itself to aesthetic values in the nineteenth century. In the last half of this century, the arts sought their independence in the cult of art for art's sake and many of the artists became some sort of self-conscious a-social beings. The artist claimed the right of pursuing the value of aesthetic beauty in its own right without reference to other individuals or society at large. Yet, though a-social, the artist and his activity came to be recognized by society itself as something superior and infinitely valuable to it. The cult of the artist went together with the cult of art for art's sake and to this period we owe the concept of the artist as a demi-god above the rules of the social order.

The parallel, however, does not go very far. The idea of an a-social or trans-social activity which yet is recognized by society as superior to itself and which it has the obligation to foster, promote and facilitate goes so much against the deepest strand of Western thought that it cannot accept it for very long without feeling guilty about it. Thus, it did not take long before the West discovered the social function of art and the whole debate began to range round it. The communist and the fascist regimes

used the whip to bring the artist into line, while in the democratic countries it was the critics who performed this function. Even if the artist tended to forget his social function, the critics were always there to remind him of his social origins and thus indirectly suggest that he should do something for the society to which he owed everything he had.

As against this, in India we hardly find any traces of a debate of this kind with respect to the trans-social seeking of man in the spiritual dimension. The early debate between the Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa traditions had sometimes a suppressed flavour of this kind. But after the *Upaniṣadic* synthesis and acceptance of the *sannyāsī*'s supremacy, hardly anybody ever seemed to have asked as to why he did not work except recently under the influence of Western social norms. There is another difference also. It was only gradually that the myth of the artist as a non-social, non-moral demi-god creating works of beauty began to be socially accepted by a fairly large section of Western society. In the initial stages, the society was positively hostile to such a conception of art and the artist. The artist in the later half of the nineteenth century felt so rejected by the society of his times that he withdrew into esoteric sects and perhaps elaborated the idea of the artist as a being superior to society as a reaction to such rejection.[3] There might have been some such stage in India, but at least from the *Upaniṣads* downwards there seems little evidence of any hostility of the society towards the *sannyāsī*.

The basic contrast in the conception of freedom, then, may be delineated in terms of freedom as a state of being and freedom as that which is essentially related to action. However, the basic differences in the conception of freedom, though fundamental and of profound importance to the society and the people who conceive of it that way, contain within themselves substantial differences between what may be called sub-types falling within the two major types we have already talked about. Much of

the history of the cultures that have subscribed to one or the other of the basic conception of freedom may be understood in terms of the predominance and conflict of the various sub-types falling within one or the other of the basic types. If, then, a concrete perspective of freedom is to be spelled out with the full consciousness that it might possibly affect society to shape itself that way, it would have to be done in terms of the diverse sub-types of freedom and the interrelationship between them. Even if we forget, for the moment, the transcendental freedom and its various sub-types, the realm of empirical freedom itself is so diverse, so vast and so complex in its interrelationships that its delineation and articulation can be seen as a formidable task for the social scientist and the social philosopher for decades to come. The interrelation between the various sub-types of the transcendental freedom and their complex relationship with the sub-types of what may be called empirical freedom are even more difficult to discover and articulate. Yet, the task is a challenging one to anyone who is interested in freedom and the fate of human society. If freedom is to be enlarged, then its diverse types, their interrelationships and the factors which contribute to their maintenance, spread and growth have to be studied. It is only when an empirical knowledge is available with respect to diverse types of freedom and the factors that sustain them that we may reasonably expect social policy to be guided by the consideration of maximizing them also.

The idea of maximizing freedom and achieving it through social policy, however, involves the notion that freedom is the sort of thing that can be measured and about which it can significantly be said that it has increased or decreased. Also, if freedom is intrinsically and essentially of diverse types, then the question arises as to how we can compare one with another. Further, in what sense, if any, could it ever be said that one type of freedom is more desirable or valuable than another?

Can we, so to say, grade freedoms in any order of importance and does the grading change with different contexts and different circumstances ? These are some of the questions that need an answer if thinking about freedom is to be made concrete and effective in contemporary times.

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3. I am indebted for this idea to the late Prof. M. M. Bhalla, Professor of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

THE SEARCH FOR A MEASURING ROD

Ideas can become effective only when they relate themselves to the milieu of the times. Otherwise, they remain just empty words connoting at best some thinker's thought, interesting only to the historian of ideas. But if ideas are to make history, then they have to translate themselves both into the need and the idiom of the times. Big, large-sounding words are suspect today. When William James asked for "the cash-value of ideas", he was voicing his dissatisfaction with thought that never met the challenge of practice and proved itself successful. So also does the modern positivist when he challenges one to give an "operational definition" of the concept one uses or to give the "verificational conditions" of the theory one propounds. The challenge to be precise, the cult of the numerical is all in the order of the day and for the same reason. As an economist friend of mine is fond of saying, "the age of poetry in the realm of cognitive thought is past".[1] He says this in the context of economics, but it is true in other contexts also.

Freedom is no exception to this general spirit of the age, and if thought about freedom is to be effective, it has to translate itself into an idiom that is current and meets the requirements of cognitive precision which are demanded by the rigours of scientific claims. The challenge to provide operational definitions of the concepts one uses and to give some criteria by which one can measure to some extent the phenomenon one is talking about is an absolute desideratum specially where empirical matters are concerned. The perspective of freedom, to the extent we want to infuse all the diverse empirical activities of man with it, has to be articulated in terms that are observable, measurable and comparable to a certain extent.

At the empirical level, as everybody knows, freedom is a multiple and diverse thing. The different sectors of a human being's empirical life have freedoms of their own and of different types. Even those who believe that there is no such thing as just freedom, freedom as a state of continuously enjoyed conscious being, believe in the intrinsic and essential diversity of freedom. Maurice Cranston, for example, writes, "... there is no *one* freedom but many freedoms; and they are as various as are constraints, impediments and burdens".[2] Phenomenologically, this would lead to the doctrine of freedom as that which is psychologically felt in relation to the removal of what is regarded as constraint, impediment or burden. This would vary from moment to moment and from person to person. Prof. Cranston seems to accept this view. He writes: "The constraints of life are of many kinds. They come and go: and when they go we say we feel *freed* of them. The things we like are just as various. When they go we feel *deprived* of them. Sometimes we regard something as a constraint, and thus feel freed when it goes, but later on begin to wish we had it again; at that point we cease to say we are *free* of it, and begin instead to *miss* it, to feel the *loss* of it".[3]

Psychologically speaking, what Maurice Cranston is saying is certainly true and the only conclusion derivable from such an exclusive definition of freedom is either that freedom is that state of consciousness which does not feel anything as constraint, impediment or burden or that it consists in a continuous alternation between a feeling of constraint and the feeling of its removal. Mr. Cranston does not see these implications of his definitions. In fact, he has not asked himself the question as to how we shall maximize the freedom in his sense of the word. Or, in other words, if we accept such a meaning of the word 'freedom' and if we also accept that freedom is something desirable and therefore worth fostering, then what sort of conditions should we produce in order that people may realize it to the

largest extent possible. "Can freedom be causally determined ?" is itself a difficult philosophical question, but if we define it in such a way that its achievement becomes empirically impossible, we make it irrelevant for individual and social action. The Indian did adopt the first alternative, but he thereby made it irrelevant for social action. The individual, of course, was supposed to pursue some discipline whereby he could attain a state of consciousness where nothing was felt as a constraint, impediment or burden and thus achieved continuous and complete freedom, that is, *mokṣa*. For Mr. Cranston, more logically, the achievement of such a state would remove the very possibility of ever *feeling* free since freedom, according to him, is only felt when some constraint or impediment is removed. The feeling of constraint will then be a necessary precondition for the feeling of freedom to arise and unless one were to feel constrained first, one would never feel free. The policy recommendation in such a situation, if one wanted to increase the frequency and intensity of the feeling of freedom, might be to increase the frequency and intensity of the feeling of constraint in one's own and others' lives. I wonder if Mr. Cranston would relish such a conclusion from his premises.

In any case, the idea that freedom is of diverse kinds may be accepted without necessarily accepting all that Mr. Cranston says further about it. Also, if the idea of freedom has to be operationally effective in the affairs of men, then we have to conceive of it in such a way that action can be taken to realize it in some measure or other. This would be true whether we conceive of it as essentially unitary or basically diverse in character. Even with respect to the transcendental notion of freedom, it may not be quite irrelevant to spell it out in such a way that concrete steps for its achievement, at least at the individual level, may possibly be undertaken with reasonable chances of success. Equally, some criteria for the achievement of such freedom and its comparative measurability for the

individual himself and for persons other than himself have to be indicated. The criteria, of course, may be direct or indirect or even both.

However, whatever may be the situation with respect to the transcendental notion of freedom, the search for criteria and measuring indices is absolutely imperative for freedom in the empirical domain. It is *only* by a continuous attempt at definition in an operational manner and their refinement and revision in the light of the difficulties encountered and the successes achieved that any solid progress in this field may be hoped for. The different sectors of a human being's empirical life have freedoms of their own and these are generally of different types. For each of these sectors, the idea of freedom, immanent and relevant to it, will have to be operationally defined in a tentative manner and then revised in the light of subsequent experience. The areas of economy, polity, sociality, the interrelations between the sexes, the structure of the family, the patterning and structure of institutions, the formal and informal areas of inter-personal relationships, the institutions of law and order and their actual functioning, the relations between nations – each and all of them should be seen and analysed in terms of the specific freedoms they foster, facilitate and restrict.

Each of these realms has a specific freedom of its own which needs to be defined and articulated and the conditions of whose emergence have to be carefully studied and investigated. The relations between the realms and the freedoms immanent to each of them and between the conditions requisite for the emergence of each of such freedoms have to be investigated and made the subject of both theoretical and empirical study. Are certain freedoms, for example, prerequisites for the emergence of certain other types of freedom? Or, are certain freedoms incompatible with each other? Is this incompatibility merely a function of the empirical conditions necessary for the emergence of those types of freedoms or is it a result of the deeper,

more intrinsic nature of the freedoms themselves. In either case, if certain freedoms are found to be incompatible, then the question concerning the criterion or criteria on the basis of which the choice between them has to be made is bound to arise. How, in other words, shall we choose between different types of freedom if we find that we cannot have all of them? Is the choice to be merely arbitrary or are there certain principles governing the choice between them? Are, in other words, different types of freedom comparable with each other? Can we, so to say, give weightage to different types of freedom and build a comprehensive, summative freedom function whose maximization may be seen as the task of operational thinking, on the one hand, and policy decisions, on the other.

The concept of a maximization of the utility function has been evolved in economics deriving from the Benthamite doctrine of good as the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But, as far as I know, the idea of a freedom-function around which the thought in the social sciences may possibly be organized and whose maximization may be seen as the theoretical and practical focus of the so-called policy sciences has not yet been formulated or focused attention upon. The possible reasons for this are perhaps diverse and of many sorts, but the one most important among them may be that freedom, by itself, is not a very desirable thing as it is more liable to be abused rather than used for creative or fruitful purpose. It is meaningful *only* when it is used for the realization of some value; otherwise, it is just a problem for any individual or society which wants to pursue any purpose of its own. However, if freedom is a precondition of the actualization of values, its realization cannot be a matter of indifference to anyone interested in their realization either.

Whatever be the reason or reasons in the past, there seems little doubt about the urgency and the desirability of finding some focal concept around which the thinking in the different

social sciences may be interrelated and which may possibly provide some sort of a bridge to what are usually known as the humanities. If the concept can relate itself to the traditional thought of the Orient and the Occident as well as to the basic seeking of man in diverse times and places, it might span the diversity of cultures. Freedom, I suggest, is such a concept. But whether it fulfils this tall order or not, it certainly deserves serious attention for being a claimant to this role. The claim, however, needs to be substantiated and the first step in this attempt may perhaps best lie in trying for operational definitions and measuring devices, subject to continuous revision in the light of the difficulties met with and the experience gained.

The problem of the measurement of freedom has received little attention up till now. The few attempts that have been made, though interesting in themselves, have hardly led to what may be called a continuous development of the theme. This, to a certain extent, is extremely surprising for freedom is supposed to be the greatest theme of Western thought and debate since at least the last two hundred years. The second quarter of the twentieth century is supposed to have seen the great conflict between totalitarianism and democracy, both at the theoretical and the practical levels. Yet, there seems to have been little systematized attempt to find operational definitions of freedom or freedoms in such a way as to permit measurement and comparison in terms of that measurement between different countries or between different time-situations in the life-history of the same country. This fact would seem even more surprising if we remember that after the Second World War, there was a great spurt in the attempts at quantification in most of the social sciences. The tendency, as everybody knows, has increased to such an extent that the mathematical approach in any of these subjects has become the hall-mark of their being regarded as sciences. Perhaps it was only the intellectuals in the humanities imbued with the classical tradition of the West who were

concerned about freedom. The strict scientists just felt indifferent towards it. The discussion, therefore, inevitably took the form of a debate which was couched in literary-philosophic terms. Even a person like Prof. Hayek whose primary professional training is in the most quantitatively developed of the social sciences, that is, economics, does not show any such orientation in his work devoted to the cause of liberty. The index to his most sustained and systematic thinking on the issue of freedom does not contain even a single entry under the headings 'Measurement', 'Measurement of liberty' or 'Measurement of freedom'.[4] The divorce between the technical-mathematical thought, on the one hand, and the value-oriented literary, philosophical thought, on the other, could not perhaps be better illustrated than in this crucial example of the thought about one of the most central issues in the life of individuals and societies that I can think of. If, then, the problem of freedom is approached in a quantitative manner, it may provide the bridge between the two types of thought that the intellectual culture of the present so badly needs.

The most comprehensive discussion regarding the problems arising out of the mathematical approach to the measurement of freedom at a generalized level that has yet been made and which has come to my notice is *An Essay on Mathematical Theory of Freedom* by Denis and André Gabor, published in the year 1954.[5] Since then, except for another article by the authors,[6] nothing has been published on the subject so far as I know. Perhaps, the feeling is that freedom is the sort of thing that cannot be measured. Prof. Hayek, for example, does take note of the article by Denis and André Gabor, but only to find it an "amusing illustration" of the preposterous idea that liberty means all good things or the absence of all evils. He writes: "An amusing illustration of this is provided by D. Gabor and A. Gabor . . . The authors begin by stating that freedom 'means the absence of undesirable restraints, hence the concept

is almost coextensive with everything which is desirable' and then, instead of discarding this evidently useless concept, not only adopt it but proceed to 'measure' freedom in this sense".[7] The author obviously feels it to be a blasphemy to "measure" freedom not only in this sense but also in any other. Otherwise, one does not see why the attempt at measurement should seem so completely irrelevant to what Hayek is trying to do himself. If economic welfare can be measured, then I, at least, cannot see why objections should be raised to the measurement of freedom. In any case, we can start only from where we stand, and my suspicion is that it is the sort of attitude displayed by Hayek which has stood in the way of any such sustained attempt in this field.

The authors have confined their attention to the measurement of freedom as *actually* revealed in the choices of men, though if *all* members of the population make the same choice, freedom is regarded by them as completely absent. In fact, it is one of their postulates that "If all members of the population have made the same choice, we consider this freedom as *nil*". The other postulates are: "(2) We consider the freedom still as zero if there is variety in the choices, but the variety is uniquely determined by factors not subject to choice. (3) In all other cases freedom must be a positive quantity. (4) The measure of freedom must never by increased by taking into consideration factors previously ignored; and that (5) the measure must be independent of or at least insensitive to some degree of arbitrary re-ordering or re-classification of the statistical material".[8]

The reasons for the postulates seem obvious, though if we take the second postulate very seriously it can lead to all the philosophical difficulties associated with the problem of freedom of the will. However, I am not interested here in either delineating in detail or discussing the points made in this pioneering paper of Professors Denis and André Gabor on the measurement of freedom. Still, it may interest you to know

some of the extremely interesting ideas thrown up in the discussion on this paper which, in my opinion, deserve to be pursued and explored further. One of the most interesting suggestions, for example, is given by Dr. D. M. Mackay. He suggests that freedom "*is the unpredictability to you of what I will do if you offer me your prediction*"[9] and that "If it is thought useful to have a mathematical index of freedom in this sense, it could perhaps be defined in terms of the change produced in the reliability of a prediction (after all possible anticipatory corrections have been made) by revealing it to the subject".[10] This, I would like to suggest, is fairly amenable to experimental study. Another very interesting suggestion was made by Dr. I. J. Good. He said that "It would be interesting to investigate whether a measure of freedom could be tied up more with economics by defining the measure in terms of the annual payment which people would accept for the loss of certain types of freedom".[11] Money being a significant quantitative index for direct and indirect measurement in the field of economics, this should remove the hurdle in finding some generally acceptable unit in terms of which the measurement may be undertaken. Similarly, there is another suggestion given by the authors themselves of finding the quantitative estimates of the extent to which certain actual or imagined fears might restrict one's freedom. They have suggested that confidential polls be arranged, "in which the populations are asked what choices they would have made if this or that unpleasant consequence were eliminated. By comparing this 'potential' distribution with the actual it may be possible to obtain quantitative estimates of the restrictive influence of certain fears".[12] The authors, of course, admit that this could only be done in a society which was at least free to the extent of allowing an enquiry into its own freedom.

The three suggestions that I have taken from this article and the discussions thereupon seem reasonably concrete and eminently subject to the usual processes of investigation in the

social sciences. I do not see any reason why they should not be pursued further by anyone interested in making the thinking about freedom more objective and experiment-oriented. Similarly, the methodological issues raised in the discussion on the paper of Professors Denis and André Gabor deserve further attention. For example, it was pointed out by Prof. Bernard that there is an assumption of discreteness of choices and also of the equality of all choices.[13] These assumptions are obviously questionable. As Prof. Kendall remarked: "In most social choices . . . the degree of choice of one category or another was not independent in that way".[14] But, as everybody knows, both discrete entities and continuous processes can be mathematically treated. The assumption of independence, however, is a little different, though even there one could use the idea of sets or clusters of choices which are independent of one another. Further, independence itself is a relative thing, a matter of more or less and thus open to the possibility of quantification. A more serious objection relates to the very idea of diversity or variety as a criterion of freedom. As Dr. Vadja remarks, ". . . If diversity is to be an indication of liberty, then a low degree might have arisen, not from compulsion, but from chance".[15] Or, as Prof. Champernowne earlier in the discussion commented, "It is well known that straightforward methods of comparing the real incomes of two communities or the same community at different times give little or no credit to greater variety. Variety is a luxury . . .".[16] The more relevant objection, however, is the earlier one of Dr. Vadja, for even if variety be a luxury, it may still be a criterion of freedom or at least of a certain sort of freedom. The comparison with economics may not be very relevant here.

The idea that there may be just one single criterion for freedom which would suffice for all countries and cultures seems obviously wrong. The cultural anthropologists would be the first to dispute any such assertion.[17] But even within a single

country or culture we may require a diverse set of criteria which together in their totality alone may tell us something about the extent and type of freedom prevalent there. The weightage to be attached to these diverse criteria in the total judgment would itself have to be a matter of insight and judgment which might vary from individual to individual and situation to situation. Its concrete spelling out, however, would lead to a greater objectivity in the discussion about the matter.

The multiplicity of criteria which may have varying importance in different situations and with respect to different cultures gets still more complicated when we begin to speak of different types of freedom. Everyone, I am sure, has heard of freedom qualified with some such adjective as 'political', 'economic', 'social', 'sexual', 'academic', and so on. The criteria for each of these freedoms would have to be formulated and the possible interrelations between them determined. It has been contended by some that there is nothing common between these so-called different types of freedom except the use of the same term in all of them. In fact, it has been urged, it is positively misleading as it suggests some general idea of freedom which could be jointly or alternatively realized by each or all of these. Prof. Hayek, for example, has written that "In any case . . . the suggestion must be avoided that, because we employ the same word, these 'liberties' are different species of the same genus".[18] And as he says further, ". . . We cannot, by sacrificing a little of the one in order to get more of the other, on balance gain some common element of freedom".[19]

The idea that there may be no common element of freedom seems plausible at first sight, but its truth seems to be of the same order as that there is no such common thing as pleasure, utility or welfare. There is undoubtedly an important point being made by the critics of such notions, but they do not seem to see that on this view all comparisons would begin to

appear a little unjust and everything would become just what it is and not another thing. This perhaps may appear to some as what Prof. Hook has humorously called "the argument of the 'slippery slope'." The argument, according to him, consists in the fact that "since in advance no one can indicate a specific stopping point, it assumes that one can never stop but that once we step on the slippery slope we must descend at an accelerated speed into the dread abyss of catastrophe, however conceived".[20] But we must know where to stop and the theoretical thinker is supposed to provide some criteria, however rough and ready, for making the decision. One has to compare things, even in the realm of freedom, for one has to make choices and in order to choose one has to contrast and compare. In a certain sense, the whole recent work on choice and decision-making may be related to the issue of freedom and its measurement. Only, we would have to structure and interpret it in a little different way.

The argument of Prof. Hayek, however, ignores another very important consideration. Even if we grant him the contention that there is no common element of freedom in all the so-called freedoms, the question of the actual and possible interrelations between them does not become irrelevant. Rather, it assumes an added importance, for we would like to know how best to reduce the coercion of some by others to the utmost possible extent which is the most primary and the most fundamental meaning of freedom according to Prof. Hayek. Further, if the other so-called 'freedoms' have positive values of their own, then the important question of maximizing them without sacrificing freedom in its primary, fundamental sense remains. Prof. Hayek himself seems to have grudgingly admitted this in his remark that "If we have to choose between them, we cannot do so by asking whether liberty will be increased as a whole, but only by deciding which of these different states we value more highly".[21] Only, in this context perhaps he would like

to use the phrase 'maximization of value' rather than 'maximization of freedom'. But whatever the phrase we use, the problem remains the same and the demand for solution at both the theoretical and the practical levels remains unmet.

The theoretical and practical difficulties with respect to the concepts of utility, income, welfare and their measurement have been the subject of most intensive discussion and debate in the field of economics. The need for making National Income comparisons between different countries and between the different stages of the same country at the different time-intervals of its growth necessitated the development of indices in terms of which it could be measured with reasonable objectivity. Similarly, the development of welfare-economics led to the attempt at finding the relevant criteria in terms of which the growth or retardation in this respect could be discovered and indicated. Prof. I. M. D. Little's *Critique of Welfare Economics* is a classical instance of discussion ranging around this issue.

In a certain sense, the very concept of development involves the idea of some indices in terms of which it may be known and indicated. Even at the purely qualitative levels where 'Ripeness is All', some objective, determinable criteria may be needed both for others and oneself. But in fields which are more objective and subjects of public policy, criteria more amenable to quantitative measurement are required. The realm of economic development, however, seems specially lucky as it appears particularly amenable to such measurement. Many other areas recently have tried to adopt this concept to their own domain. One frequently hears of such phrases as 'political development' or 'social development'. In fact, one of the recent issues of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* is devoted wholly to political development.[22] But the only criterion of political development which could possibly be amenable to quantitative measurement among the various ones that are offered there happens to be the economic one.

Prof. Wilfred Malenbaum's is the only suggestion that seems to be quantitatively oriented. He suggests that national income divided by population at different time-intervals within the same society may be taken as an index of political development.[23] But most of the others, in spite of all talks of operationalism and objectivity, do not seem to be even self-consciously aware of the need for finding criteria which may possibly be capable of some sort of measurement. For example, Prof. Karl Von Vorys tries to define political development in terms of the capacity to balance coercion and persuasion to achieve initiative in an environment of progressively disrupted traditional small-scale societies and chronic economic disequilibrium.[24] Or, take the suggestion of Manfred Halpern that the change in modern times demands more than adding increments of power, substance or efficiency. The revolution of modernization requires an enduring capacity to generate and absorb persistent transformation.[25] Both the observations, though interesting in themselves, are hardly structured in such a way as to show the awareness that the criteria formulated should be capable of possible measurement.

The use of the concept of development may perhaps be partly responsible for this, though even that requires criteria in terms of which any significant comparative judgments may be made. Politics, unlike economics, has been the central realm where thought and discussion about freedom have taken place. Along with power, and perhaps even more fundamental than it, freedom has been a value immanent to the field of political science. In times of war or revolution, the value of power, particularly in its military sense, may appear preponderant and decisive. But in times of peace at least, the value of freedom looms larger. Even otherwise, the problem of the legitimacy of power has always seemed central to the discussions in political science. It is surprising, therefore, that little work seems to have been done with respect to the measurement of political

liberty, specially when the issue of totalitarianism *versus* democracy has played such a large part in the political debates of the twentieth century.

The measurement of political liberty would not only force us to seek its definition in more operational terms but also draw our attention to some of the essential differences between freedom and other types of values and between one type of freedom and another. In National Income comparisons, for example, distribution and variety as providing opportunities for choice are not very relevant. But where freedom is concerned, 'distribution' is the very essence of the matter and there certainly has to be some opportunity for choice if it is to be actually effective in any concretely given situation. With respect to different types of freedom, however, the extent of distribution may vary and the more or less of it may have varying kinds of importance or significance.[26]

Besides the problem with respect to distribution as an essential or inessential requirement for the various types of freedom, there is the other question as to what types of freedom are essentially presupposed for the emergeance of other types and what are, in principle and practice, independent of each other. The problem of the interrelation between different kinds of freedom is one of the most fascinating and challenging in this domain. Certain types of freedom may be mutually reinforcing or indifferent or even positively incompatible with each other. The exploration and delineation of these diverse types of interrelationships is the first requisite for any concrete policy recommendations that one may like to make for the preservation and enhancement of freedom. Another important problem in this connection is to find out as to what is the minimum degree of a particular kind of freedom which is required almost as an absolute necessity and beyond what point it may be deemed a luxury. In other words, it is important to determine the extent to which, beyond a certain point, a particular type of freedom

may be deemed to be dispensable. In case this notion is found intelligible and relevant with respect to all or even some kinds of freedom, it would be interesting to inquire if the point beyond which a freedom may be regarded as luxury varies with different types of freedom or remains the same with respect to all of them. In this connection again it would be interesting to explore if the concept of "differences of intensity" in the realm of freedom would be helpful in understanding and measuring freedom.

Freedom, then, is nothing so esoteric as to be incapable of being approached in the usual manner of the positive sciences. At least, there seems no reason why freedom in the empirical domains of man's life be impervious to such an approach. The search for operational definitions and measurable criteria of freedom as manifested in the different areas of man's empirical life and their causal determinants and diverse interrelations is the supreme task for the social sciences. An integrated social science can only emerge when there is some focal point or central concept around which and in terms of which the diverse findings can be organized and interrelated. Freedom, I suggest, is such a concept. It does not merely provide a focus for theoretic understanding but also an orientation for policy recommendations in these domains. Even beyond this, it suggests perspectives for educational planning in which the achievement of a personality type, which naturally fosters the freedom of others and enjoys a felt freedom of consciousness for itself, becomes the desired goal of education at its most fundamental level. The diverse forms of upbringing of children in different cultures may also be studied and evaluated in this perspective.

The task of social philosophy and social science is, thus, clear in this perspective. As I have said elsewhere, ". . . if both the perspective and the focus of theorizing be in terms of freedom, the thinking subtly begins to be *for* freedom also".[27] That is what we want and if a positive, operational, quantitative

approach is made to this problem, I suggest it would be done. It may also provide a link with the other concept of transcendental freedom around which so much of the thought of other times and other cultures was woven in the past. A bridge between the social philosophy of the past and the future is needed and this may possibly open the horizons to a deeper integration and linkage which humanity seems to need so badly today. Ideal utopias have been conceived so often by man, but the idea that utopia may be linked to reality through the scientific concept of model with its cognitive and conative overtones is yet to be exploited by the social sciences.

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SOCIETY: REALITY OR UTOPIA

Society, we argued in the first lecture, is the sort of reality which is substantially affected by how it is conceived to be. In subsequent lectures we have tried to explore some of the implications of this situation with illustrative references to cultures in the past and the challenge that it might pose for the present and the future. In this last lecture, I should like to focus your attention upon the responsibility which this thrusts upon the social scientist and the task that it challenges him to perform. If it be once accepted that there is at least a possibility that the social scientist may shape the social reality through the very processes of his thought about it, then the question is opened as to how he should meet this situation and remain a scientist to the extent that it may be possible to him.

The very first transformation that this situation, if honestly and self-consciously faced, would make will be in the social scientist's answer to the question, 'What is the nature of society?', or 'How ought society to be correctly conceived of?' The answer obviously would be that there is no essence or the specific nature of society and that there is no one correct way in which *alone* it can or ought to be conceived of. The question will be seen not as a cognitive question but as a valuational question masquerading in a deceptive cognitive garb. The question, in fact, if correctly understood, is a demand for valuational decision. It asks, what kind of society would you like to have or what kind would you prefer? In short, it asks you to spell out your notion of utopia or what society ought to be.

This may seem a little too strong, a little too exaggerated, but basically there is no escaping from the situation. It is,

of course, true that no society can be completely shaped by the way it is conceived of to be. But that was nobody's contention, certainly not ours. As everybody knows, it is not true even with respect to works of art which are supposed to be creations of the imagination. There are constraints which the artist has to overcome and, in fact, the concept of art-creation would lose its significance if imagination were to be effective and sovereign without any hindrance whatsoever. Even if it be contended that the case of society is different as it has to fulfil the functional exigencies of survival, I would only point out the *actual* diversity of societies which all presumably must be fulfilling the said functions, since otherwise they could not have survived at all.[1] It should be remembered that even if the effect of diverse ways of conceiving of society is only marginal, it is this marginality which matters most. It provides that distinctive shape, nuance, shade or flavour which is the heart of every society and distinguishes it from all others. Without it, society would hardly be the sort of human undertaking we know and feel it to be.

But if the very act of conceiving of the nature of society has a valuational consequence and commitment in it, then how can the social scientist remain scientific in the performance and discharge of his role and function which is supposed to be essentially value-neutral. The issue may be put in another way. Usually, the scientific procedure assumes the independence of the object of study from the scientist's processes of thinking about it. This leads to what is known as the freedom of postulation which is the heart of the scientific method today. But freedom of postulation can only be accepted where the subject-matter is unlikely to be affected by the way we postulate it to be. In case the situation has even a remote likelihood of being different, it represents a challenge of a different sort which has to be realized as such and met with in a different way.

The first and the foremost requirement in such a situation is to be self-consciously aware of it. Not to acknowledge it or even to remain ignorant of it is the worst that could happen in such a situation. Unfortunately, much of the thinking about society in the past and the present suffers from this defect. Even among those who have insisted on the basic distinction between Society and Nature, it has been tacitly assumed that society's relation to the thinking about it is no different from that of Nature's relation to thought in general. More often than not, the social scientist tries to suppress this awareness even when it is brought to his notice. The reason for this is simple. He instinctively fears that any such acknowledgement on his part would inevitably result in his banishment from the realm of science to which he so much aspires to belong. But the results of suppression, as we all know, are healthy neither for the person who suppresses nor for others who may even possibly be affected by him.

The acknowledgement and the self-conscious awareness is, however, only the first step. It may itself be used in diverse ways and for diverse purposes. The marxists, for example, are quite self-conscious about the partisan and conative role of knowledge, specially when it concerns the social reality. They are aware that theoretical formulation about social reality in the social sciences is not, and cannot be, value-neutral. Even more than this, they are aware of the inalienable causal role which all such formulations are bound to play in the historical process. The choice between different formulations, then, is to be made not on some abstract ground of truth, but on the basis of calculation whether it would lead in the direction of the desired result. Cognitive hypotheses, if they are supposed to shape the actual reality, cannot be left free to be made in any way that one may like. They are instruments of class-war in a deeper sense than the usual ones with which men fight. In Lenin's classic phrase, "Truth is a bourgeoisie prejudice". But

even this is only a limited statement. What Lenin really wants to say is that there is no such thing as truth in the sense of objective, value-neutral statement about social reality. There *cannot* be such a thing, at least in a class society and, therefore, the so-called bourgeoisie truth is not truth at all but what serves the interests of the bourgeoisie class in the society. The task of the Ministry of Truth, is therefore, as in Orwell, to manufacture evidence and argument for whatever is regarded as subserving the interests of the real revolutionary class as interpreted by those who happen to rule at the moment.

This obviously is to give up the notion of scientific objectivity as usually interpreted and understood in most fields of modern knowledge. It seems almost a counsel of despair, an attempt to give up and renounce for once and all the seeking for objectivity and truth. But this is not necessary. The social scientist *qua* scientist need not become partisan in the process of history. It is the supreme capacity of self-conscious thought to objectify everything and there seems no reason why it should fail in face of the peculiar situation found with respect to social reality in the social sciences.

The realization that the theoretic postulations in the social sciences have inescapably a hidden value-dimension poses the challenge to make it explicit and bring it into the open. The scientist, however, need not identify himself with the value-consequence and the value-commitment involved in the postulation. He can work out alternative postulations with their alternative value-consequences and commitment and articulate them in the fullest possible manner. It is the scientist's task to make us aware of the different value-possibilities inhering in any situation and of the diverse costs involved in their realization. The *actual* choice between the alternatives may, then, be left to the relevant policy-maker who is supposed to be responsible for making the decision.

Utopias, in fact, have always been conceived of to bring social reality nearer to men's desires. In the past, they have generally been conceived of in a static manner and in utter disregard of any awareness of constraint-situations. But this is hardly necessary. There seems no reason why utopias which are dynamic in character and which take into account diverse types of constraint-situations cannot be built. In fact, we may conceive of utopias as *alternative models* with different assignments of value-preponderances to different values. Seen in this perspective, it may not be wrong to say that what we need is to build as many utopias as possible. However, the vital difference from all the previous attempts will be in the self-conscious envisagement of alternative utopias by the same thinker and his lack of commitment to any of them in his role as a scientist. Further, the building of utopias would henceforward be the task of the social scientist equipped with all the mass of relevant information and the mathematical tools to weave them into diverse possible interrelationships rather than of the literary artist with the gift of imagination.

The task of the future theoretician in the social sciences, then, may be conceived of as the building up of as many utopias as possible with numerous alternatives of constraint-situations and different weightage to various kinds and types of freedom that we have talked about in the last lecture. A utopia may be treated as a blueprint, something like an architectural design built by the ingenuity of the creative imagination out of the given constraints and the different value-parameters. The constraint-situations, as everybody knows, are diverse. Further, they vary over a period of time, change according to the choices made at an earlier interval of time and the expected and unexpected changes in the environment of the society or the individual. Similarly, the realm of values, too, is plural and diverse. What is, however, even more important in this connection is the diverse weightage that may be given to the different

values. A different weightage gives a different priority and a different priority results in a different definition of what is to be regarded as a constraint in the situation. The task of the social scientist *qua* scientist is, however, *only* to articulate these diverse possibilities to the best of his ability. What is *actually* chosen out of them for possible realization is not his responsibility, at least to the extent that he exercises it as a scientist.

The analogy with the architectural blueprint may be pressed a little further to yield some interesting results. The architectural design has to fulfil primarily certain functional requirements. The building, whether it be a church or an office or a home, has to fulfil the purposes for which it has been built. Yet, in spite of what the functional architects say, a building does not achieve the status of architecture if it merely performs these functions. Firstly, there is not just one single way of fulfilling these functions. All buildings presumably fulfil their functions to some extent or other. It will be difficult to say whether one church building performs its function better than another. Even the architecture that is inspired by purely functional criteria is not all the same and the preference between diverse examples of functional architecture is not on the basis of their fulfilment of functional requirements, as all are supposed to fulfil them equally. Secondly, I would like to urge that the so-called functional requirements are specifiable only to a certain degree. Beyond a certain point, it becomes meaningless to ask as to what functions are required to be performed by a particular work of art. Even in the case of a building, functional requirements are only relative to the particular socio-cultural pattern of living in a society. The Western style dining-room, for example, would be functionless in a traditional Hindu home where orthodox dining has to be done in the kitchen and there too on the floor. The functional requirements, however, may not only differ from culture to culture but also within the same culture at different time-intervals. The same structure,

therefore, which was functional at one time may become dysfunctional at another and yet this would hardly be considered by anybody as making a difference to the beauty, dignity or grace of the building if it already had any.

However it be, few would deny that considerations of aesthetic elegance, dignity and beauty, the way a building *looks* and *feels* are as important, if not even more, as the functional requirements it fulfils. Rather, we may go even so far as to say that a building does not achieve the title of architecture if it lacks these qualities. Similar is the case, I would like to hazard, with society. In its case also, the feel, the look, the direction towards which it seems to strive are as, if not even more, important as anything else.

The conception of utopia, then, is not so irrelevant for the social sciences as many seemed to have thought. As a model, it may function as an ideal type helping us cognitively to understand any society whose value-objectives and constraint-situations approximate to those of the model. On the other hand, it may also provide a conative guide to action as providing an array of ideal possibilities with diversely weighted valuational objective functions under different constraint-conditions to choose from. In this it would do at a more sophisticated level what Plato first attempted in his *Republic*. Only, he would have given up the static and monistic value – presuppositions involved in Plato's attempt – presuppositions that have continued up till now in all attempts at such constructions. Also, he would be far more aware of the essential diversity of constraint-situations than either Plato or his successors have ever been. The concept of utopia, if it be thus revised and formulated, may provide both a cognitive and conative guide to the so-called policy sciences. The ideal type shall merge with the ideal and provide a valuational guide to action.

The conflation of the ideal type with the ideal may outrage the sensitivity of the theoretical purists amongst the social

sciences. I *am* aware that Max Weber's ideal type was a pure theoretical construct built to understand the empirical reality and that it had nothing to do either with the description of *actual* empirical reality or with providing it an ideal direction towards which it could move or in whose image it could be built. But to think that one may construct an ideal type in the social sciences without its possibly turning into an ideal is to misunderstand the nature of the social sciences. If there is even a little bit of truth in what I have been urging in all these lectures, then this is the most seductive but dangerous illusion which the social scientist may entertain with respect to his subject-matter. The 'economic man' may have been conceived of as a pure ideal type to facilitate the construction of economic theory, but who does not know that men did begin to conceive of themselves in those terms and did try to approximate to it. The economic theorist could not turn back at that point and complain that he had been misunderstood by the ignorant vulgar. For, had he been a little more sophisticated and self-conscious he could have taken this possibility into account. It is only his theoretical *naïveté* which made him ignore what he *should* have taken into account. In any case, if a society is to be 'economically' efficient, its members have to conceive of themselves as 'economic' men and the more they approximate this ideal, the more economically efficient the society is likely to be. Not only this, unless most men conceive of themselves in such terms most of the time, economic theories built around these constructs would not apply in any relevant sense of the term. The empirical reality, then, must approximate to the theoretical construct if the latter is to be even cognitively relevant to it.

The situation, as everybody knows, is not confined to economics only. It is not only the idea of the "economic man" that has been built as an ideal type, and become in the process an ideal for men to approximate to. We have also had the "genitally sexual man", the "class man", the "race man"

constructed as ideal types and affecting the actual men in the process. Freud and Marx are household names in the twentieth century. So is perhaps the idea of race propounded by Rosenberg and practised by Hitler and his cohorts in Germany. The devastating logical conclusions of these theoretic ideas were historically enacted on the stage of Europe in the twentieth century. The facts are well known to every student of contemporary affairs and yet the illusion that a theoretically postulated ideal type will not turn into an ideal for people to follow persists unshaken among the social scientists and philosophers of today.

The scientific objectivity in such a situation would be safeguarded not by protesting that it is a misunderstanding of the notion of ideal type to confuse it with the ideal and that the social thinker cannot be held responsible for the misunderstanding if it does actually take place. Rather, it is *only* by *accepting* the possibility of the one turning into the other and exploring the implications of such a transformation that objectivity may be safeguarded and retained. The value-implications of a theoretic ideal type postulation in the social sciences are as important as its role in the cognitive understanding of the phenomena concerned. Besides this, the value-neutral objectivity of scientific cognition may be strengthened by giving as many diverse weightages to different values as possible and by entertaining as many diverse postulates about the nature of man and society as imaginable. This would ensure that cognitively, the scientist *qua* scientist is not pushing or even recommending one value rather than another. In this way, no single value or a specifically ranked hierarchy of values would get the exclusive support from the social scientist.

I have been using the terms 'freedom' and 'value' rather interchangeably within the last few pages. There are, of course, very important differences between them. But for the purposes of clarification of the role of a social philosopher or a social scientist in the context of the peculiar relation obtaining between

the theoretic conceptualization and the subject conceptualized the situation with respect to both is practically the same. Whether we talk about freedom or about values, the social theorist has to face the same situation, and there can be no great differences in the ways of meeting it either.

However, I would personally like to urge the focusing upon freedom as the theme around which the conceptualizing and model-building in the social sciences may be undertaken and organized. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, freedom, as so many have urged, is the foundation of all values. This is true not only in a metaphysical sense, but in an empirical sense also. Whatever may be the metaphysical meaning of freedom, we all know how necessary it is empirically for the realization of any value whatsoever. Secondly, and this is not realized by many, freedom is not only the foundation of values but, so to say, their end also. The pursuit of values can only be undertaken if man is free, but the end of all value-realization is ultimately the complete fulfilment of human personality in its self-conscious being, which is just another name for freedom. Freedom as presupposed and freedom as self-consciously realized are two different things. The first is the foundation of all values, even in its empirical aspects. The second is the end of all values, an end without which even the values themselves remain unfulfilled in an essential respect.

Freedom is, in a sense, a unique category in many respects. It presupposes itself for its least little exercise in any realm and on any level whatsoever. Yet it, itself, can be the subject of infinite concern and may be pursued as an independent value in its own right. It provides the critique of all values and, in an ultimate sense, their justification also. As a recent writer, in another context, has said, "It is a function of social processes, within which it serves as method, criterion and goal. As method, freedom is basic to rational inquiry; it is the working out of conditions necessary for valid judgment. As criterion,

freedom helps us to determine even those limitations which are necessary for its own function. And as a goal, freedom helps us to determine the directions in which we should work".[2] He has only forgotten to mention that it is its own foundation and presupposition also. Further, though it seems in many cases to be a function of social processes, to understand it as such would be to miss its essential nature. This, however, is not the place to elaborate or argue about this point. The socio-centric view about freedom, as we have already urged in the previous lectures, is not exactly the statement of a fact but the assertion of a value-position.[3]

The relation between freedom and value, then, is complex. Each stands to the other as means and end in certain situations. Freedom itself is a value and each value may be seen as resulting in a particular kind of freedom which may be seen as its essential core. The complexes of values, thus, may be seen as complexes of freedom and the interrelations between values, the interrelations between freedoms. The only relevant objection to this that I know of emanates from the consideration already discussed that the idea of different types of freedom falsely suggests that there is something common to all these which is freedom and that there is no incompatibility between them. As Isaiah Berlin has remarked in his famous inaugural lecture before the University of Oxford, "These are not two different interpretations of a single concept, but two profoundly divergent and irreconcilable attitudes to the ends of life".[4]

The question, however, as to what is to count as one concept and what as two has and can have no clear-cut answer as Isaiah Berlin seems to think. The point always is whether the similarities are to be considered as more *important* than the differences. If so, the concept is one; if not, the concept breaks into two, each emphasizing the difference from the other. But even where there are similarities, there may be nothing common amongst all the instances as Wittgenstein pointed out in his

notion of 'family resemblances'. Even otherwise, one may have a category which necessarily differentiates itself into specificities which are different from each other. Colour is one such example and, as everyone knows, one can never therefore have just colour but only this or that colour. Freedom, then, may be something like colour and be found in this or that form of itself and never just as freedom.

However it be, the idea of diverse types of freedom with different interrelationships between them seems worthy of theoretic postulation and empirical investigation. This is the only way in which the monistic faith in a single criterion and a final solution can possibly be eliminated. Unless multiple utopias are scientifically thought and worked out in detail, the unitary vision will haunt man and extract sacrifices for ever. Prof. Berlin is right when he asserts that "One belief, more than any other, is responsible for the slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals . . . This is the belief that somewhere in the past, or in the future, in divine revelation or in the mind of an individual thinker, in the pronouncements of history or science, or in the simple heart of an uncorrupted good man, there is a final solution".[5] If it be true that all the diverse ends of men cannot be harmoniously realized and that "not all of them are in principle compatible with each other" and that all values cannot be graded on one scale, then the only way remaining to the social philosophers and scientists of the future is to spell out this awareness in as concrete a manner as possible.[6]

The awareness of plurality, however, can be terribly demoralizing unless it itself is seen as a central value. The concept of freedom tries to do just this. It provides the foundation on which the house of plurality can be thought and built. Plurality, even incompatible plurality, can be sustained by a consciousness that is healthy and free. The two, in fact, are the same. The freedom and health of a consciousness may be judged

by the diverse types of positively incompatible values that it can sustain.[7] So also we may judge a society's health and strength by the diverse types of values, compatible and incompatible, that it can permit to be pursued by its members. We are heirs to the awareness of the whole spectrum of values pursued by man in the past. The historian and the cultural anthropologist have made us aware of the diversity of man's pursuit in the realm of values. This awareness poses a challenge to the thinker of tomorrow. The vast array of causal knowledge that man has, and is going to have, demands an integration in terms of this awareness which alone may be said to provide some sort of goal challenging us to action. Freedom in all its diverse forms, empirical and transcendental, may provide such a focus for integration of all thought concerned with man and society in the future and thus provide a guide to social action we so sadly lack today.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. On the similarity and differences between Society and a work of Art, see *Considerations Towards a Theory of Social Change*, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965, pp. 89-99.
2. Francis M. Myres, "Three Types of Freedom", *Inquiry*, vol. 10, No. 4, 1967, pp. 349-50.
3. For a more extended discussion of this issue, see *Considerations Towards a Theory of Social Change*, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965.
4. Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 51-52.
5. Isaiah Berlin, op. cit., p. 52.
6. Ibid., pp. 54, 56.
7. By 'positively incompatible' I mean the incompatibility between values that themselves are positive in character.

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