

## ONE WORLD IN TWO PERSPECTIVES SOME COMMENTS ON PROFESSOR BARLINGAY'S PAPER "ONE WORLD"

The present paper is an attempt to approach Barlingay's central thesis of the unity of the world as grounded in inter subjective community, developed in his paper "One World" published elsewhere in the present number of the Indian Philosophical Quarterly. Since the approach is guided by a certain theoretical orientation, it may be useful to have an initial statement of the guiding theoretical ideas themselves.

The orientation is in terms of Marx's philosophical anthropology. A radical social theory must needs have a foundation in a certain conception of man, for to be radical is to go to the root of the matter and Marx observes, the root of the matter for man is man himself. But it all turns on how we conceive, man himself, on the conception or image of man we have. What then is the Marxian image of man, its philosophical psychology? I would suggest that the central guiding image is that of man as a being of *praxis*, of man as a being who constitutes himself in his appropriation of the world. Praxis is simultaneously the naturalization of man and the humanization of nature. As Merleau Ponty writes "the individual is a being-in-the world." The human subject is simply a mutual compenetration with the real world. No matter how profoundly we penetrated into the subject, we always find the world. This world-orientation is a decisive and key principle of Marx and he has, in many contexts, insisted upon it. For example, in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* we find the principle formulated in emphatic terms. We may sum up the main characteristics of the Marxian conception of human nature thus : Man is a natural being with sensuous needs and appetites; the objects of these needs exist outside of him in the real world and they exist in such a form generally, which makes it necessary for men to expend energy, time and skill in

appropriating them to their needs; labour becomes a constitutive necessity for men. But in this metabolism of man with nature, which is the underlying structure of labour, the distinctively human wants and needs, what may be called man's "human essence" is itself developed. Man humanizes himself in his dealings with nature; in the necessity of labouring satisfy their biological needs and wants, men also develop their distinctively human capacities, powers and dispositions. It is in this sense that labour naturalizes man. According to this way of looking, man's orientation to the world is constitutive of his own nature, for he can realize his human capacities only in so far as he works in the world outside him, by modifying and adapting the objects of that world to his own ends. But the reality, that is the term of his actions, is not merely or simply given to him as the source of gratification. It is something that he has to fashion and mould; it calls forth his activity, his transforming praxis and this human action is self-constituting as well as world constituting. In acting man develops a consciousness and identity as an individual human action is conscious and self-conscious. Thereby, his work or activity shapes not merely the objects of the environment into use-values, but in that very process, he shapes his will and purpose. Man's praxis is the praxis of a self-conscious and purposive being. Marx writes "The production of life—both of one's own labour and of fresh life in procreation—now appears in a double relationship, on the one hand, as a natural, and on the other hand, as a social relationship." The production and reproduction of life is a socially formed praxis. Men appropriate the objects of their labour in the form of associated production; it is this social formation that mediates the world to men and hence in the fashioning and shaping of use values out of the objects of the world typically social modes of action are conceptualization are involved. Technique and theory are both socially structured appropriations of the world. In subjecting the objects of the world to these technical and conceptual forms,

men *humanize nature*; nature is transformed by technology and theory into a context of *human life*.

Hence if from one point of view it is necessary to speak of the *naturalization of man*, it is equally necessary to speak of the *humanization of nature*. These, of course, are not separate processes or trends, but different forms or aspects of a single but complex process—the metabolism of man with nature. By subjecting himself to the exigencies of labour, man naturalizes himself, realizes his human essence in sensuous-practical forms, but man's practice is the practice of a self-conscious social being. It is, therefore, a social practice and in this social appropriation, men humanize the world of objects.

It is in terms of this general orientation that I propose to approach the central thesis of Barlingay's paper, for I believe the dual structure of praxis namely—world constitution and self constitution allows a lucid perspective on the paper under discussion. For instance, Professor Barlingay, at the very commencement of his paper, introduces what he calls, two concepts of the world the cosmocentric and the anthropocentric. The cosmocentric concept, in his view, is "an absolutely objective concept." This, in its widest or most general extent, is in the concept of the objectively existing world, objective in the sense of existing independently of human action and intervention. But the cosmocentric concept is itself a complex concept involving layers or strata of such objective existence; Professor Barlingay distinguishes regional or local as well as most general or all inclusive levels; he, for instance, distinguishes the geographical and the astronomical levels of the cosmocentric point of view. Although he explicitly mentions only these two strata, yet, in effect, he also distinguishes other levels within the cosmocentric perspective. The various artificats in their objective forms, the achieved results of action, also form layers or strata of this objective world, for they also become the objective context or environment of human action; in this sense, the 'facticity' of culture,

the productions, techniques and social organizations also from a particular stratum of the objective world; of course, these also have a human or social meaning, which Barlingay does explicitly recognize, but what matters at present is to recognize the facticity of human action, i. e., that it creates an objectively existing context. But more importantly, not only the products of human action, but the human actors themselves, are parts of the objective world. As he notes "man may create other things, but he himself is part of the world process". From this point of view, the whole of the human world itself may be regarded as a construction upon the objective world,

The entire complex of ideas which are included in the concept of the cosmocentric world can also be approached in terms of the idea of the world orientation of man. This intentionality towards the objective world, this need of an objective fulfilment of man's needs and powers is summed up by Marx's comment that "a non-objective being is a non-being".

This object-relatedness or world-orientation is the basis of the many levels or strata of the cosmocentric concept of the world, for it is this intentionality that articulates and expands itself in the form of the structured concept of the objective world.

The other concept of the world, Barlingay describes as a social or anthropocentric concept of the world - this is the view of the world as the product and achievement of human action - it is the world of creativity and meaning and value. In fact, it is the world that even confers recognition of identity as human beings, for an important element of this human world is language and it is language which makes possible "identity and identification". This is the world of meanings and functions and as Professor Barlingay observes, in this perspective, it is not structure which determines functions, but rather it is the functions which determine the structural forms. But this world of meanings is not a private, but a social world, for the meaning of everything is finally determined

by the *relationship between men*. If the cosmocentric point of view sums up the world orientation of man, the anthropocentric sums up the dimension of praxis, for it is human activity that constitutes the human world. Praxis as constitution presupposes the objective world. From this point of view, one might look upon the human world as a construction over the objective world, but it is also praxis or human activity which gives meaning and identity to the things in the world. As Barlingay observes "in the final analysis, when we talk of the world, it is not the geographical or the astronomical world, but the world determined—by human relations that we are talking about."

But as we remarked, the structures of world orientation and self-constitution are aspects of a dynamic process and indeed, it is to emphasize this processual character that I used the terms, 'naturalization of man' and 'humanization of nature'. It is, hence, necessary to grasp the evolving inter relationships between these two notions; in terms of the conceptual terminology of Barlingay's paper, the question now is to understand the relationship between the cosmocentric and the anthropocentric concepts of the world. From this point of view, it seems to be that one can distinguish two levels of thought — one might call them the 'contemplative' and the 'activist' levels, as it were or the Feurbachian and the Marxist levels, also. For example, there are places where one gets the impression that the human world is a construction, one feels like saying an 'imposition' or 'projection' upon the objective cosmocentric world. In explicit term, Barlingay tells us that the anthropocentric world is included in the cosmocentric concept of the world. Incidentally, the language of the paper at this point is significant for Barlingay actually writes "I must *confess* that even the anthropocentric concept of the world is finally included in the cosmocentric concept of the world."

Again he writes "I may be *allowed* to say that the anthropocentric world, which really matters to us, is an ever-growing

construction upon the astronomical world". From this point of view, which I call the 'theoretical' or 'contemplative' point of view, the human world of meanings and values appears as projection or forms of the cosmocentric world. But there are under tones of a more radical or 'activist' orientation also. For we are told that the identity of the world, its knowability is itself due to language which is part of the anthropocentric perspective. He writes: "Unless there were human interventions there will be nothing but some world, some X about which it will be possible for us to talk. Our very identity and identification starts with naming and the world that we construct is likewise a human world". There occurs immediately after this, a profound remark, namely "though humans may not always be aware of this". Here, in a single phrase is summed up the problematics of mystification and false consciousness, but we shall come back to this a bit later. Again he tells us "the value, meaning or purpose of everything that exists in the world is determined by the use they have to human beings. Their meaning is determined by the relationship between man and man. It follows that the meaning of everything in the world is correlative to the relation of man and man." It also follows that in the final analysis, when we talk of the world it is not the geographical or astronomical world *but the world determined by human relations* that we are talking about. Here surely the activist orientation, the poverty of constituting a world of meanings and purposes and values is distinctively recognizable and it is to this celebration of human creativity that the story of Gautama and Lord Brahma is alluded to.

The two orientations therefore are discernible in the paper; they are the two 'gestalten' which structure and shape the insights; but they lie juxtaposed, like two importunate claimants for our attention and the tension between them persists unresolved. It seems to me that this is not merely an aesthetic comment about the paper, but a conceptual one, for this tension is itself the symptom of a

final unresolved problematic of the paper, namely the issue of the dialectical interrelationship of thought and action. It is because the issue is left latent and unresolved that the analysis at the end, takes on a distinctively 'Feuerbachian' tone. But this point may gain greater force and relevance, after we have noticed another crucially important aspect of the paper - I allude to the phenomenon of reification. Although he does not use the term itself, the awareness of it is explicitly present. For almost at the very beginning, when he is describing the objectivity of the world, he remarks on how men are unaware of their intervention in the making, creating or appreciating of the world. He similarly talks of the intellect leading to alienation, of man's mastery over nature blurring the real communication between men, of failures in constructing a truly human world, of social forms which diminish or deny the other, of the loss of equality. At a more general level the metaphor of the funnel-like society is the image of a reified society, where society becomes an organic whole. Indeed the threat of the loss of equality, of the suppression of freedom are the controlling moral concerns of the paper and the idea that men could imprison themselves in a world they have themselves created, that this mystification and false consciousness lead to exploitation runs like a red thread of subdued anger throughout the paper. And complementarily, on the positive side, the image of the social net is an image of the transparency of human relations, where the perception and acknowledgement of the other becomes the basis of morality and justice. Reification, as per the paper could take either a gross or subtle form; the gross manifestation of the loss of the presence of the other is the tyranny and despotism of the funnel-like society, where one man alone reigns supreme and all others become merely instrumentalities of his sovereign will. But the excluding of intersubjectivity could also take a more subtle form as a system of many privacies. In the totalitarian society, the loss of intersubjectivity is due to the coercive imposition of power, whereas here

the loss is due to the absence of communication for "the essential point about communication is publicness. Communication is denied in the world of windowless monads".

With this indeed we reach the moral dimension of the paper for "publicness means recognition of the other, and in its full import, recognition of others means recognition of others as equal". This equality is the very structure of the human world for it is embedded in our language itself. The structural basis of this free communication is community and the concept of one world is the concept of the emergence of one community. It is in this community that there could be a moral acknowledgement of the other as equal. This equality is to be accomplished through the complementarity of many individuals and the functioning of this complementarity is loving inter subjective communication. It is this communication that achieves the unity of purpose and love.

We have before us an inspiring moral humanism but it is a moral vision which does not deny material basis or material structures; indeed this kind of humanism presupposes the reality of an objective material world; the human community is not to be conceived as a community of spirits. Indeed as Marx observed the greatest enemy of genuine humanism is such a kind of spiritualism. Certainly Barlingay does not deny the reality of material structures that support the moral community, nor does he deny the reality of structures which could destroy it. But the bond between material structures and the moral vision is not exposed. Consequently the insights of the paper assume a tragic moral vehemance; a plea for the reorientation of communication among men, an invocation to justice and equality—such moral forces are to transform the structures of oppression and economics becomes a corollary of morals, and the paper is pervaded by the muted sadness of Feuerbachian 'contemplative' humanism.

I do not want to be understood as suggesting that moral and cultural principles are mere ideological reflections of socio-



economic conditions and that to take such forces seriously is to be deceived into the illusions which every epoch has about itself. Such naive deterministic understandings have been the seed beds of political terror and surely against such forces of determination, the appeal to justice and equality, to brotherhood and community is not a matter of mere moral rhetoric; it is an ultimate defence of the essential moral dignity of man. But what I am suggesting is that culture and the realm of the super structure in general, should be seen in terms of a response to the structural exigencies of the basis. These tensions of the social-economic organization of the life have to be identified and conceptualized; they have to be recognized as problems of men i. e., symbolically, ideologically. The response, therefore, is in terms of culture. Men bend their cultural resources, the meanings and morals of their immediate history, to the recognition and symbolization of these exigencies. These recognitions and identifications are legitimized or questioned, accepted or rejected in terms of more ultimate principles and concepts, of legality, of justice, of the nature of things. Morals and metaphysics thus become ever more resigned expressions of the understandings and misunderstandings of men of their insights and illusions into their own life process. Thus, culture, the realm of the super structural forms and values become the battle ground in which men become conscious of their human life-organization and fight out the tensions and discords of that organization. But if this cultural mediation of structural exigencies is undetermined, then the response could either be a pacification of consciousness or a radicalization of it. In the one case, the repression in life is interiorized and dehumanized men moralize over their dehumanization; in the other case, a roused consciousness prepares the ground for a liberating praxis. But in any case only when we take the basis and the super structure in this dialogic relationship can we go beyond the illusions of the epoch. To fail

to take note of this dialogic relationship prepares the way for two kinds of mislocation of the issues of liberation -- on the one hand, one may be tempted to think of liberation in forms of 'political' revolution, a Jacobian breakthrough out of repression and exploitation by means of the fiat of the revolutionary will. But this way lies terror and the cult of therapeutic violence. On the other hand abjuring violence, one might set store by the rejuvenating strength of moral appeals, of the demands of justice, equality, and love -- the lure of the ideal of 'Sarvodaya'. The choice now appears to be between the way of the Yogi and the way of the Commissar. But in reality, both are rooted in the same neglect -- the failure to think through the dialogic relationship between thought and action. The paper halts at the threshold of this problematic; it is to be hoped that Professor Barlingay himself would show us the way out of the dilemma. If the present note induces him to take up the issue, then it would gladly let itself be 'aufgehoben'.

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