

REVIEWS

I

Societies and Cultures : Chattopadhyay, D. P. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, Pages 151.

Two of the most significant phenomena of our age are : Entropy Law and theoretical crisis. On the one hand Entropy Law seems to be pervading all of human existence : physical, social, psychological, and religious. On the other hand the efforts to explain and meaningfully interpret the disorder and randomness do not appear to present satisfying solutions. Marx proved the scientific principles of inevitability of socialistic transformation of capitalism. Mao introduced the concept of cultural revolution and Stalin also added that the scientific laws can be captured by human beings moved by lust for power. Gandhi presented as an alternative to capitalism and socialism, his theory of "enlightened anarchy" which is capitalist in form and socialist in content. History tells that Marx failed and Gandhi has been more worshipped and betrayed than followed. And the theoretical crisis, when unfolds, leads to reexamination of the fundamentals. This is true both in sciences and in humanities. In this context, *Societies and Cultures* of Dr. Chattopadhyay presents a comparative analysis of the nature of man and the social institutions. The book also presents the thesis that there is no necessary gap, conflict or discontinuity between past and present and the challenge of modernization is to be met by preparing "critically" for the cultural integration and transvaluation.

The basic philosophical problems before both Marx and Gandhi are the problems of alienation and freedom. According to Marx, four types of alienation emerge from the workers' situation of work, in a bourgeois society : (1) alienation from the process of work, (2) alienation from the products of work, (3) alienation of the worker from himself, and (4) alienation of the worker from others. In most developed communism by positively overcoming the private property the elimination of alienation is gradually achieved. While the socialism can directly eliminate the objective alienation, development of **communism** would do away with self alienation in stages. For Marx,

however, freedom is freedom—from—alienation of the social and not atomic individual. Gandhi looks at alienation from a fundamentally different perspective. In his opinion a self-alienated man is a violent man. Man's *Swadharma* is non-violence, but due to an alien *Yuga-dharma* he is self-alienated. Gandhi also had a strong belief that the systematic suppression of truth is not possible, and, violence can not be institutionalized without inviting as well as suppressing violence.

Objective study (the life of which is criticism) of history shows that violence entails alienation. When the polity is threatened from below, the violent politicians tend to fall back more and more on bureaucracy, police and military. Marx wanted to remove the capitalistic ills and violence for all times by revolution. He emphasized the necessity of shortening the life span of 'transitional' dictatorship (of proletariat). In practice the institutionalization of violence led to perpetuity of violence and dictatorship. This can only be checked by counter-violence. Gandhi had always a fear of increase in the power of the State. According to Gandhi the hallmark of progress is man's freedom and the rise in the power of the State destroys individuality. For him the ideals should be quickened and purified by the renunciation and sacrifices of the master spirits and preclude the possibility of use of force. The Gandhian utopia lies in the fact that for him political struggle is moral and fight itself is victory.

Dr. Chattopadhyay is quite right in looking at the Gandhian philosophy in the context of his life. To understand ideals as well as ideas it is important to understand the man in question. Gandhi's image of man is essentially spiritual, argues Dr. Chattopadhyay. Created by God, man which is for him the supreme consideration, is essentially good and unaffected by the corruption of social institutions around him. He is inspired in his political actions by the realization of the lonely spiritual identity. The ethics, of Gandhi is based on the metaphysics of oneness of God and humanity. Gandhi's intention was to moralize politics and he maintained that self-alienation can not be really undone without self-realization. He writes : "My creed is service of God and therefore of humanity." Nevertheless, his ethics has a secular content. Dr. Chattopadhyay says that to accept Gandhi's ethics and the ideology based upon it, one need not share Gandhi's *advaita* faith in the unity of God and man — and he tried to show that both

empirically and logically ethics is independent of religion. "Man can be ethical without God."

I do not believe that the ethical question is independent of the religious question and man can be good and just in a Godless world. The social-scientific basis of ethics that Mr. Chattopadhyay attempts to build is particularly inadequate in analysis of the Gandhian ethics. For Gandhi the inner voice is the voice of God and the goodness of human will is contingent upon the will of God. For Gandhi *Law, Truth, Love and Life* are all synonymous of God. He insists on the ethics of relation based on ethics of solitude and the later can not be derived without a mystic and religious vision of life. This is a different point that for Gandhi religion is personal, non-institutionalized and transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. Though convenient for secular appearing politicians, it is dangerous to separate Gandhian morality, and ethics from religion of *Advaita*.

Dr. Chattopadhyay has done a splendid job in the analysis of the cultural confusion in contemporary India. According to him cultural confusion is found mostly among those who have no root in tradition. This is confined primarily to the educated few, and in the vast majority of people in India, the quantum of cultural confusion is related to extent of influence of English education. This accrues to the political confusion. In our politics, he says, masses are not participating and the social elite is using it to its own advantages. Further cultural confusion also emanates from the fact that those who have not realized *Swadharma* (i. e. identity) can not assimilate the *Yugadharma*. Persons as Gandhi, Rabindranath, Aurobindo and Abanindranath discovered the dynamism in the depth of our culture and due to this they could succeed in assimilating the best elements of the Western culture. Finally, he takes up the problem of utility aspects of education in general and ends up with the following conclusion :

The dichotomy between liberal education and technological education is false. The line of demarcation between culture and utility can not be clearly drawn; one constantly shades into the other.

In all the eight papers contained in the book, Dr. Chattopadhyay has clearly conveyed that "We must avoid the extremes of bloody

revolutionism and irrational traditionalism, futurism, and revivalism. We must not repeat the mistakes of the French encyclopaedist and the Trotskyites or those of Burke and the apologists for conservatism."

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II

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE—by Roderick M. Chisholm. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, U. S. A. : Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1977. (Second Edition) pp. xi + 144.

Chisholm's epistemology for the most part comprises a theory of how the empirical evidence for knowledge is to be taken up and processed. But on second thought evidence is only a very small segment of all the knowledge that it is possible to have. The theory at the outset lacks an ontology of what there is and there is nothing metaphysical about it. In *Theory of Knowledge* knowledge is referred to as 'our' knowledge and is taken to mean the activity of knowing as carried out by the human subject in an empirical setting. Even axiomatic propositions are considered to be contingent upon their acceptance by someone and upon being 'better known' than other propositions. For the empiricist analytic statements are a matter of our conceptual agreement in a linguistic context.

With its strong theory of evidence, *Theory of Knowledge* focuses upon that which is largely gratuitous to the knowing process rather than upon that which is essential in principle, but in a sense much more tenuous to it. For example, we would be hard pressed to admit that purely possible situations never can be made to yield knowledge, yet statements concerning possibilities may have little or no evidence to support them and are therefore not warranted perceptually. In fact, theory of knowledge, with which epistemology in its theoretical role is concerned, need not coincide with any evidence at all. Pure mathematics or pure logic or an adequate theory of knowledge as such must be willing to countenance this fact and be convinced that knowledge cannot be said to be a function of experience, although admittedly knowledge cannot be without experience of some kind save definitionally and in concept.

In order to make an empirical theory of knowledge workable, it is assumed that we can know what to take as evidence for believing that we can know something or other. The author has given what he calls a 'rule of evidence' for our guidance, viz., that a thing is to be taken as evident when something else served to make it evident. This rule is elevated into an epistemic principle and utilized as a

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criterion of knowledge, supposing all the while that we know in what respect the factors in question are to be regarded as significant. The rule plainly contains within itself a form of circularity for knowledge, for whenever we admit that we know how to recognize evidence, we have admitted to a form of knowledge. To further confirm the evidence we are asked to draw upon a 'presumption in its favour', again a preconceived point at which the verification concept, when we stop to consider it, has already been established by definition.

The author attempts to equate our knowledge with perception, which very often it is not, as the *Theaetetus* teaches, and the reason is that our interpretation of perceptions is subject to correction. In the matter of beliefs, they also should not be identified with what we take our perceptions to be, since my beliefs may outweigh and run prior to any perceptions that I may have. Our beliefs as such are genuine but may very well be private and sufficient to the believer alone, so that the truth or falsity of beliefs is hardly applicable to a theory of knowledge concerned with propositions that must be made logically verifiable. A theory of knowledge should surely, rather than focus so largely on perceptions, stress a build-in legality of rules and principles in order to make the theory teachable and in order to avoid the anarchy inherent in individual interpretation alone.

After a considerable search for epistemological guidelines, ostensibly objective, the author in chapter six resorts simply to psychological certainty as an epistemological criterion. This kind of certainty amounts only to the fact that the agent knows with clarity and accepts with confidence whatever it is that he claims to know. To be sceptical of this solution we should recall that for over a thousand years physicists and astronomers accepted as conclusive the Ptolemaic system of planetary motion, a theory which subsequently had to be abandoned as untenable because it did not conform in the simplest manner with the discovered facts concerning astronomy in general and the solar system in particular. The certainty with which the theory was held therefore in the long run proved to be an unreliable criterion because it was not sustained by the best subsequent theory had to offer.

The answer attempted by empiricism to the problem of the criteria for knowledge can, by the very nature of the empirical world,

be neither theoretical nor conclusive. For Chisholm has it that all claims to knowledge must be satisfied through evidence supplied by experience, which is no better than to say that whatever we aspire to know must correspond with what we are expected to know by means of sense perception. In fact, an epistemology utilizing the empirical approach invites an equivocation upon the term 'knowledge', for the theoretical knowledge required of epistemology will need to be knowledge in universal terms rather than knowledge based altogether upon actually existent situations yielding facts stimulated by evidence to be found only in more or less isolated instances. Declaring for that type of knowledge concerned primarily with material gained through human sensibility admits of an acquisitive kind of knowledge which scarcely conforms to the uniformity required of an abstract theoretical science.

Theory of Knowledge presents an epistemology that is permeated by far too much psychologism in its one-sided overconcern with the empirical conditions for knowledge. The book is remarkable in its failure to treat, or to adequately treat, in those areas that most intimately connect with the formal knowing process, topics including definition and generalization, syntactical and semantical forms, synonymy and homonymy, identity and identicalness, reference and meaning, denotation and designation, conditional and contrafactual statements, analogy and models, and variables employed as uninterpreted entities. Any theory of knowledge should attempt to explicate the various indispensable devices that must be utilized in attaining a closer grasp on the conditions by which both experience and thought processes are deployed to advantage in advancing to the objective of true knowledge. It should be very much a part of knowledge to know that the truth is not to be found within the sphere of science alone.

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III

THE LIBERAL THEORY OF JUSTICE : A Critical Examination of the Principle Doctrines of A THEORY OF JUSTICE by John Rawls. By Brian Barry. London : Oxford University Press, 1973, Pp. x, 168.

A Theory of Justice by John Rawls (Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A. Harvard University Press, 1971) is said to be a work of some importance; it is claimed to be of significance for both moral and political philosophy and worthy of intensive study. Yet Dr. Barry, having obviously devoted this kind of study to the book, does not hesitate to criticize it to the extent of forthrightly declaring that Rawls's theory of justice cannot be made to work. Since *A theory of Justice* carries us into avenues of thought which doubtless merit attention, the perusal of Barry's much shorter work effects a marked economy in time and effort for those who may not wish to go the longer course with Rawls.

Rawls assumes throughout the priority of justice, and justice is defined as fairness. But the subject matter, nevertheless, admittedly is social justice, so that the theory as it unfolds is anything but a formal theory of justice. It professes to be a natural rights theory, an extension of the contract doctrine where the parties concerned agree to be held responsible for the principles of justice to which they subscribe. Justice for Rawls is a justice of institutions; it is the first virtue of social institutions operating for the benefit of mankind. We thus learn much of social and economic affairs but very little about natural justice or law; in typical empirical fashion the author tracks down the various applications theoretical values mingled with proposals for the management of everyday affairs. Barry rightly asks how Rawls's theory can hope to become a universal theory, if, for example, in the choice of its principles the level of economic development of a society must be taken into account.

Rawls has set up what he calls an 'original position' which seems to be a ready-made device whereby the participants are able to ascertain the ultimate nature of justice consistent with an awareness of the limitations of human knowledge. It is a hypothetical position and corresponds somewhat to a state of nature, with rational agents as parties to an agreement groping for principles that at least must not run counter to the foremost wants of the individual. The

'agents' or 'parties' are the theorists and in fact could be Rawls himself. From this 'original position' the principles of justice are 'deduced', although it is not clear why principles, having once been established, must be derived from supposedly still wider premises. Rawls spells out his principles of justice in terms of equal liberty and equality of opportunity for all citizens, where the moral agents concerned are free to keep these principles under constant review. The selected principles in turn become avenues toward obtaining 'primary benefits' such as self-respect for the individuals that form a part of a viable society.

There is more than one instance in which Rawls confronts us with a basic position that is simply circular. For example, it is said that the principle of fairness assumes institutions that are just, or that the parties to the 'original position' must either possess or have the capacity for a sense of justice, or again that justice requires a well-ordered society in which to function. Always there appears to be the assumption that there must be a society that is inherently just before we can hope to have an effectively operating justice.

Even though Rawls does not want to be classified as a utilitarian, it is one of Barry's sustained criticisms that he nevertheless continues to reside in this same broad spectrum. The main reason for this is that Rawls's principles, it is claimed, scarcely look beyond the satisfactions that are to be derived from primary goods. It is Barry's contention that liberty as a first principle, pretending to be egalitarian, is incompatible with the entitlement to primary goods such as wealth, power, self-respect and an Aristotelian type of self-realization for which the average individual must compete. The means to want-fulfillment become indispensable instruments to Rawls's first principle defined in terms of equal liberty. Barry offers a lengthy treatment of the liberty-wealth relationship; he finds inconsistency in Rawls's method of establishing the priority of principles and tries very hard to improve upon it by resorting to a technical analysis of his own. He asks if principles formulated in terms of wants can be made morally respectable for what is otherwise professed to be an 'ideal-regarding' theory.

If much of Rawls's theory has failed to place justice on a purely idealistic plane, the section on lawmaking is one in which the author becomes rather too idealistic altogether, for he appears to believe

that ideal legislation is the one prerequisite for just laws and equity. In fact, the choosing of a constitution seems to cover all of law-making. Within the precincts of the legislature justice is thought to become endowed with an uncontaminated purity in contradistinction to its debased likeness which is all too much in evidence in the rough-and-ready world of affairs. Rawls apparently is not ready to make compromise with a human fallibility that tends to mutilate the law, nor with the vested interests that attempt to mold the law to their own peculiar concerns. In legislating for the just society, Rawls never considers it expedient to take into account the role of represented organizations in the interests of a more balanced society or as an alternative to the presence of the monolithic state. But Barry on his part would not agree that purity of motive is always the chief driving force behind all modern governmental policy. In fact he would be very reluctant to concede that a lofty idealism in itself is the main factor in shaping society, and would be more ready to admit that the evidence points to the influence of the contingencies of circumstances rather than to a careful and deliberate planning.

Barry criticizes liberal thinkers in general when they insist that an individual good also may be said to be a collective good. On the strength, therefore, of this 'liberal fallacy', issue is taken with Rawls's alleged basic error of reporting individual wants as the wants of society. In a society boasting a liberty that is available to all persons only conditionally, the individual thus should not expect to enjoy the kind of freedom that permits him to exercise all the power that he would like. Liberalism is a worthy ideal, Barry contends, but the desire in mankind for hierarchy and dominance is still disturbingly inherent. Personally he would support a type of unjustified 'laissez-faire' liberalism, even though the liberty thereby achieved is unable to offer a guarantee of security for everyone.

Familiar with Rawls's former writings, Barry's analysis of *A Theory of Justice* is astute and penetrating. Barry is severely critical of much of what Rawls has put forward, but at the same time shows a certain respect for Rawls's efforts in that he has seen fit to enter into a detailed discussion of his theory.