

The issues of space, time, and causality are themselves closely related to the unending dialectic between the realms of necessity and the realms of freedom in which man is essentially and continuously involved. From the basic biological level to the highest levels of the functioning of reason, imagination, and spirit, there is always the problem of the constraints that are felt at each level and where, though a person always feels that he has the 'freedom' to effectuate something, he is also aware that this 'freedom' is both circumscribed and limited by facts and forces about which he knows very little and over which he has hardly any control. The incessant curve of the biological processes that constitute the foundation of an individual's body ever remind him of this. But while they are so evident at this level, they are not absent at other levels where perhaps an individual senses freedom even more pre-eminently. But, in any case, the realms of freedom always presuppose the realms of necessity for their functioning and what should be characterised as a realm of necessity and what a realm of freedom is largely relative, for that which appears to be a realm of freedom may appear to be a realm of necessity in relation to the realm that it facilitates on the basis of its functioning.

The identity of a civilization may thus be seen in terms of the ways in which it has articulated the concepts of freedom and necessity, and interrelated them in its thought about man and his destiny. It would also be instructive to find its mapping of the realms of necessity and the realms of freedom, and the relations between them, for the way in which a civilization has done this affects the way millions have seen themselves and the world around them. Indeed, conceptions of freedom in terms of both 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' need to be explored in this connection as well as the idea of freedom both in the empirical and the transcendental domain. The issues of 'domination', 'hegemony', and 'exploitation' are as relevant in this

context as those of the achievement of a larger 'self' through its identification with a civilizational culture that transcends the individual both in space and time. The concepts of power, domination, hegemony, and exploitation have, however, to be seen in a more differentiated way than has so far been done; unless we are clear about what we mean by a non-exploitative and non-hegemonic society, there is little point in seeing all asymmetrical relations of power as essentially negative. There are many positive asymmetrical relations where the asymmetry is only temporary and the unequal relation is for the purpose of overcoming the inequality later in time. Most relations relating to teaching, apprenticeship, and socialization are of this kind. Even where the asymmetries are of a relatively more permanent order, it is necessary to ask what the purpose or purposes of such a relationship is supposed to subserve and foster. Similarly, it is necessary to ensure that exploitation is not so defined that the elimination of exploitation becomes impossible in principle, or that all asymmetrical relations become 'exploitative' by definition.

It may indeed be asked in this connection as to how much uniformity a civilization has sought to impose on its members and how much latitude or deviation or difference it has permitted them. Similarly it may be asked if plurality and difference have been valued in the civilization and, if so, to what extent, or in what way it has conceived of the nature of reality, for ultimately it is in the relation between the one and the many that becomes a paradigm of the relation between unity and plurality in a culture or civilization. A certain amount of uniformity seems to be the very precondition of reasonable social living in any civilization, but the differences relate both to the way in which this necessity to have uniformity is itself theoretically conceived of in the civilization and how much of it is expected in different areas of human living. The Marxian idea of the appropriation of surplus value, as also Marcuse's idea of

'surplus repression', need to be interrogated not only in terms of the necessity of these for the existence of any civilization, but also in terms of how much a civilization needs them in order to pursue its projects; for ultimately, a civilization conceives of itself in terms of the 'project' or 'projects' which it launches in a spatio-temporal perspective. Its identity is therefore to be seen in terms of the project it conceived for itself as pursuing or realizing, however vaguely, in time, and in terms of which it considers itself to be meaningful and significant in the empirical domain. The idea of a 'project' has normally been thought of in relation to individuals and some recent existential thinking has seen man in terms of a project. But, ultimately, all individual projects are derived from the projects of the civilization of which they happen to be a part, and the project or projects of a civilization may be discerned from the fact that not only do they haunt its individual members over successive generations, but also that people return to them again and again, even if the pursuit of them has weakened or lapsed over long periods of time. The projects arise from a reflection on the human situation as it is encountered in self-consciousness and the paradoxical and problematic character that it presents to this reflection. To this self-consciousness everything is an object, and yet it cannot accept its own self being completely an 'object', even though it realizes that to others it is so. Similarly, it cannot accept the fact that the biological curve from birth to death that ostensibly and conclusively seems to define one's being is the real limiting and defining character of the self. It thus finds itself, because of the effect of this consciousness, alienated or rather different from both nature and society, which it necessarily presupposes and in which it is essentially involved. Besides, it finds itself also in an ambivalent relationship with the transcendent which it cannot but conceive of as the ultimate 'other' encompassing everything that 'is', including itself, even though it

seems to have the closest and most significant relationship to itself.

The 'projects' that emanate from this are perhaps the most foundational to a civilization, and the way it has responded to this situation may be one of the deepest differentiating characteristics of a civilization.

A civilization's identity is thus not, as Toynbee supposed, in terms of its response to the challenge that it encountered and in terms of which it may be supposed to have its genesis. The challenge, if any, is primarily internal to the self-consciousness itself rather than being, as Toynbee thought, 'external'. Nor is its decline due to the idolization of the successful response that it made and its compulsive repetition even when the situation had changed, as Toynbee suggests, but rather to the fitful forgetfulness of the foundational project or projects that launched the civilization on its journey in time. Indeed, individual human enterprises become 'useless passions', to use Sartre's phrase, when they get de-linked from the civilizational enterprise, regaining their meaning and significance when linked to it once more.

The realization of the 'project' of a civilization is of course unending in time, and like all that comes into being in this world of ours, comprises an inexhaustible variety. Yet, as the projects and the vision proceeds and is realized by a succession of living generations, it is through them and in them that they find their concrete shape, which however, they can never fully contain or embody. The so-called 'idolization' about which Toynbee talks is thus only the consequence of the illusion that any particular embodiment or specific concretization has completely exhausted or embodied the vision or fully realized the project. It is the backward-looking glance that 'freezes' the project into immobility and the obsessive neurosis of a civilization may be discerned in its fixations on particular moments, objects or institutions which it deems to fully embody the vision or

fully realize the project. The past, in such situations, no longer functions as an inspiration for the movement into the future or even that from which lessons may be learnt, but rather as something to be fully and slavishly imitated so that not even the smallest detail may ever be lost.

This may appear to go against the well-known fact that most religions seem to postulate some perfect moment in the past which, according to them, was a definitive intrusion of the trans-historical reality into time, thus requiring perpetual remembrance and return to it not only in order that the moment may not be forgotten but also that it may be relived repeatedly and inspiration drawn from it. It is of course true that most of these religions also talk of the second coming of something in the future which will complete the temporal series and fulfill it in some extraordinary sense. However, the relation between the original intrusion of the supra-temporal into time and of the so-called 'second coming' in the future is never very clearly indicated. Also, there are religions that treat the relation between the timeless and the temporal as a continuous process, in the course of which there are no privileged moments when alone the divine 'intervenes' in history. But, whatever the variations on the theme, religions are primarily backward looking in inspiration and thus seem to be 'stuck' in a frozen mould from which they find it difficult to extricate themselves and thus seem to stand directly in the way of what we have called the visions and the projects of a civilization in terms of which it has really to be understood. Religions then may be seen as the frozen moulds in which the project and the vision of a civilization has got stuck and from which it seeks to free itself to move forward though they are continuously dragged back to an earlier moment when it was a creative breakthrough in the realization of the vision and the project. They begin to function as a 'paradigm' of what a civilization considers itself to be and with which it identifies to such a degree that it

thinks or rather feels that if it abandons them even to the smallest extent it will cease to be itself. Yet, as the example of the western civilization in its modern phase has shown, a civilization can give up its identification with a religion with which it had identified itself in its past without a serious loss of identity and yet recover its foundational project and vision. But while the modern western civilization seems to have been successful in substantively de-identifying itself with Christianity, it does not seem to have done the same with its Greek heritage. Instead, it appears that the great effort involved in freeing itself from its total identification with Christianity could only be achieved by identifying itself with the pre-Christian Greek heritage, particularly its so-called 'rational' variety. However, it seems now to be overcoming even this identification in its post-modernist phase where Aristotelian rationality, 'Plato's pharmacy' and Greek art seem as far off as anything else in being its model.

The achievement of this radical de-identification from both the Christian and the Greek heritage raises the question as to whether the project and the vision of the current western civilization still has any continuity with those in which it was rooted, and whether the parochial projects of a civilization can become the universal project of mankind which, in a sense, the current western civilization seems to claim, since it openly proclaims that it has superseded all past civilizations, western or non-western.

Such illusions are not, however, new in the history of civilizations, for almost every civilization, even in the past, has thought of itself similarly. So far as religions are concerned, this is known to everybody, yet as everyone also knows, this has not been true in the case of any religion, for each has not only divided into many sub-sects but has even had foundational schisms so fundamental that they have generated as much animosity, violence, and hatred as has usually been the case with their relations with other

religions. Similarly, civilizations have also claimed an ecumenical role independently of the boundaries that a particular empire or a particular religion drew for itself at any one period in human history. Toynbee's idea of universal religions arising in the womb of universal empires thus appears to be mistaken, as the real universality seems to have belonged not to the church or the state but to civilizations which have transcended the limits of both, since most civilizations have contained within themselves not only diverse political entities at different moments in time, but also different religions in the course of their long history. Yet, however persistent the claim to universality, the reality has always been that there have been a plurality of civilizations in recorded history and there seems little reason to think that the situation is going to be any different in the foreseeable future.

The principle of diversity and plurality seems to be writ large on the empirical reality in the space and time of which we know, and there seems little reason to believe that it will cease to operate with regard to civilizations in the future. It is, of course, true that there appears to be a sustained, deliberate, and systematic attempt by the western countries to reverse this at all levels, including the basic genetic one that perhaps provides the foundation for it in the biological realm.

However illusory the current western project may seem in the metaphysical perspective which it itself is fighting at every level in order to safeguard its own position, there remains the problem of meaningfully conceiving of the relationship between man as a civilizational product and humankind which transcends all civilizations, providing the raw material for the cultural and civilizational construction of the biological human reality into the cultural-civilizational one we know. There is thus a challenge for all civilizations to transcend themselves so that to be a man does not mean to be only a civilizational being belonging

to some one civilization or other, just as to be a man does not mean to be a Christian or a Muslim, a Hindu or a Buddhist, a Jain or a Confucian, or a Taoist. The transcendental unity of man has to be postulated beyond the biological one in order to apprehend the possibility of a trans-civilisational identity of man which permits the possibility of going beyond the civilizational identity that one inevitably has without denying or destroying it. However, the biological and the transcendental identity can only provide the structural basis for the civilizational enterprise of mankind reaching beyond the specific civilizational enterprises that we have had up to now. The projects and visions of these different civilizations are ultimately human projects and visions deriving their sustenance both from the biological and transcendental dimensions that men equally share. A dialogue between these projects and visions will thus ultimately be an outreaching of man from his/her civilizational specificity to something larger than what s/he has been able to be as a member of a particular civilization. There is, of course, the problem of whether these projects and visions can themselves be seen as a part of a still wider project and vision which has so far only been vaguely apprehended by human beings. Sri Aurobindo in his books *The Life Divine* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* attempts something of this sort. A similar attempt has been made by Teilhard de Chardin in his book *The Phenomenon of Man*. Most of these attempts have, however, scarcely taken note of the specificity of the projects and visions as they have unfolded in different civilizations. Those, such as Spengler, who have taken note of the specificities of at least some of the civilizations, have emphasized the complete desperateness of the enterprises and their 'closedness' towards one another. However, rarely has the issue been either clearly formulated or the difference, opposition, and conflict among them been clearly articulated. Even when some such attempts have been made, they have mostly con-

fined themselves to the domain of great religions, where the contrast between the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic religions, on the one hand, and the religions of India and China, on the other, has largely been drawn. But, as I have already said, religions are not coterminous with civilizations, and hence even if the opposition that has been drawn is correct, it does not mean that this must necessarily be true of the civilizations. There are of course some thinkers, such as Northrop, who did not see civilizations in terms of religion but rather in terms of cognitive experience where 'intuition' and 'theorization' play an equal part. Yet, according to him, the east in general, has emphasized the immediate, intuitive, aesthetic apprehension of things while the west has emphasized the theoretic postulational character required for knowledge. In his book, *The Meeting of East and West*, he argues that the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum that the east has emphasized was as much a part of given experience as the postulation of theoretic entities necessary to understand experience. He formulated the contrast in terms of a distinction between concepts by intuition and concepts by postulation.

However interesting this may be, it does not see civilizations in terms of the visions or the projects, the problematic or the questions which, as I have said earlier, seem to characterize a civilizational identity at a deeper level than these. The same limitation seems to affect Sorokin's formulation in terms of which he has seen the growth of western civilization from 800 BC to AD 1920 as a fluctuation between 'Ideational' and 'Sensate' cultures, with a synthesis of the two in the transition from the first to the second which he termed 'Idealistic'.

Besides this issue of whether these projects, visions, problematics, questions can be seen in terms of some trans-civilizational projects, visions, problematics, and questions deriving from the basic biological-cum-transcendental structure of a being who is self-conscious, and whether these

have any intrinsic incompatibility between them as they appear to have been apprehended in different civilizations up to now, there is an additional problem, which stems from the essential unfulfillability and realizability of these in time. If this is realized, then the task of the civilizations would itself be seen to be unfinished and hence their attempt to transcend themselves towards some trans-civilizational goal would appear to be a betrayal of the task entrusted to it by the past history of its endeavour in this.

The tension and the conflict between a human civilization transcending all civilizations and existing civilizations is, however, not exactly as new as may appear at first sight, especially in the contemporary context. All civilizations in the past have not only extended their frontiers but have also come into active contact and interaction with other civilizations not only through war, trade, and conquest, but also through what may be called, a genuine desire to understand and assimilate the other's project, vision, and values. This aspect of the interaction between civilizations has generally been underplayed because of the habitual historians' understandable fascination with the formation and dissolution of centres of political power and, more recently, those of wealth and riches which, in classical Indian thought on the subject, were clubbed together under a single *puruṣārtha* entitled *artha*. But, however underplayed by historians, there has been a fascination with the 'other' not only for its strange and exotic character which lies at the root of most recent anthropological studies, but also because the 'other' represents another possibility, another *puruṣārtha* of an individual's own being which has not been explored or developed in his own civilization. The story of Chinese travellers in search of Buddhism epitomized so graphically in the life of Huien Tsang cannot, for example, be understood in any other way. However, the story of persons travelling in search of knowledge is as old as of those who have ventured out in quest of profit and plunder. If

we remember the difficulties in travelling at that time and those involved in learning a foreign language and mastering it to such a degree as to be able to translate it into their own language, it is possible to begin to appreciate the impulse in at least some members of a civilization to understand the *puruṣārthas* of another and make them available to his own people. If it is further remembered that it was through the activities of these persons that such a large mass of literature was not only transported over thousands of miles but also preserved, translated, and received in course of time by millions of people of other civilizations who gradually tried to relate the projects and insights of their own civilization to them, it is possible to begin to realize that the dialogue between civilizations and the attempt of people belonging to one to transcend their own 'parochiality' has also been a perennial feature in the past of all civilizations.

The expansion of Islam, unfortunately, has provided a wrong model of the expansions of civilizations and, while it is true that political patronage has facilitated the expansion of cultures and civilizations, it has seldom been as decisive a factor as has generally been thought by most historians who have paid attention only to the political or the economic aspects of the situation. The history of early and medieval Christianity is perhaps a better example of the spread of religion, but an even better example may be found in the spread of Buddhism across the continent of Asia before the rise and the spread of Islam. But as I said earlier, religions are not coterminous with civilizations, and the spread and encounter of religions should be distinguished from those of civilizations, even though the two have been inextricably intermixed in the past in most civilizations. The story of the Indian civilization is perhaps substantially different, for no single religion has ever been identified with its history over long periods of time. The presence of Buddhism and Jainism right from the begin-

ning and their continuance for thousands of years is evidence of this. So also is the rise of new religions within the broad framework of these, and also others deriving from the Vedic Upaniṣadic tradition. It is true that Buddhism disappeared from the thirteenth century after the destruction of Nālandā by Bakhtiar Khilji, but Jainism continued to flourish, as did other religions which have arisen in India or which came from outside and established themselves here.

The phenomenon will perhaps be understood better if we move outside the context of religion and look, for example, at the fascination of the west Europeans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with India and China, and the attempt to learn such difficult languages as Sanskrit and Chinese to translate texts in their languages so as to make them available to their countrymen. This had not much to do with religion, even though there was a missionary-cum-political interest which has been emphasized by a number of writers on the subject. However, basically, a large number of scholars were concerned with understanding the 'other' and even in appreciating and making a part of their own life that which they considered worthy of assimilation. The romantic movement was influenced by these studies even though some think that it was the result of a 'misunderstanding' between the east and the west. There is a similar fascination which almost the whole of the non-western world has felt towards western creations from the nineteenth century onwards. The unbelievably massive attempt to understand, internalize, and appreciate the civilizational products of the west in virtually every form, both intellectual and non-intellectual, is evidence of this. This has generally been ascribed to the political and the economic domination of the west, but even if this is true in part, it does not explain the whole story. Ultimately, it is a fascination with what another civilization has achieved and an attempt to

reach out from a particular civilizational parochiality, as has happened so frequently in the past.

The complementary movements of the western and non-western civilizations to understand one another over the past three hundred years seems, however, different from other such attempts, for it has displayed a greater continuity and has been more systematic than those in the past. The attempt has affected both the sets of civilizations in such a way that it is difficult to foretell the consequences of such a sustained endeavour to reach out of themselves in order to understand and to some extent internalize the values, the *weltanschauung* and the vision of another civilization. There has however been a difference, in that while western civilization has opened itself to almost all other civilizations in the past and the present, the living non-western civilizations have sought to do so only in relation to the western civilization. There has hardly been any attempt, for example, of the Chinese or Indians to understand one another even to a limited degree. This asymmetry in the enterprise of reaching out of a particular civilization has been ascribed to the political domination of the west during these centuries, but the Chinese interest in understanding the Indian civilization had ceased long ago, and in spite of the fact that the West Asian civilization in its Islamic phase had politically dominated parts of India for a long time, there seems to have hardly been any attempts on the part of either of the civilizations to understand one another. The isolated case of Al-Biruni makes little difference, while the Indian side does not even possess an Al-Biruni. India has seen very few translations of major philosophical works, either from West Asia or from China during these long centuries of political and economic contact. If only the evidence of philosophical texts in India were to be taken, there would scarcely be any suspicion of the dominance of West Asian countries in large parts of the subcontinent. There has of course been a

greater interaction in the fields of arts, science and technology, but even there, on the basis of the data provided in Rehman's Bibliography that covers the period from the eighth to the eighteenth century, the result is meagre. The number of translations from Persian and Arabic into Sanskrit is so small that if one remembers that the period covered is a thousand years, and that the West Asian presence was politically entrenched in many parts which were the home of Indian civilization one can only conclude that most of these civilizations were far more inward looking and far too satisfied with the involvements in their own civilizational concerns to be attracted by what the other represented. The situation of course has dramatically changed as practically everyone in all non-western civilizations is eagerly looking out of his/her own civilizational frameworks to what the west has achieved in terms of knowledge, power, wealth, and creativity in almost all domains of human endeavour. But the interest is confined primarily to the west alone and even the little knowledge they have of other civilizations is through western works on these. Thus, while, each of the non-western civilizations is being transformed by the western, western civilization itself has been influenced by virtually all the other civilizations of the past and the present through its ever-present curiosity about them.

Western civilization, however, faces a dilemma in not being able to decide whether its own influence on non-western civilizations is a source of strength or weakness, nurturing little doubt that the source of its ascendancy in the fields of knowledge, power, and wealth lie in its own civilizational roots and *weltanschauung* which it has been developing from the seventeenth century onwards. In this process it has gradually been divesting itself of the burden of its past heritage that it inherited both from its own civilization and from others. Increasingly, there is emerging a clear-cut division between matters of scholarship and issues of current concern, the soft areas of aesthetic and spiri-

tual concerns, and between those that deal with the hard realities of political power and economic domination. These are seen as primarily rooted in the current context of science and technology which are themselves rooted in what can only be called a primarily western civilizational way of looking at man and nature which seems so different from the way it has been perceived in all other cultures up to now. The total banishment of transcendence in the understanding of nature, man, and society is perhaps the clearest evidence of this. It is not that there is no 'return of the repressed' even in the hard core domains of knowledge such as physics, but, ultimately, it is only a playful dalliance with no seriousness about it, for to take it seriously would mean, in effect, to undermine the whole enterprise as it has developed over the past 300-400 years of western history.

The dilemma however is not new, for even in the ancient civilizations where the awareness of transcendence was visible almost everywhere in the culture, those who dealt with or thought about polity and economy were deeply aware of the little relevance it had in these domains. The realms of polity and economy seemed impervious to the claims not only of 'transcendence', but even of morality or what was known as *dharma* in the Indian tradition. The political theorists of the *Arthaśāstra* tradition in India not only distinguished between what they called *rājadharma* and *rājanīti*, but also explicitly argued for the irrelevance or even harmfulness of *mokṣa* as the quest for transcendence as a *puruṣārtha* not only for the king but also in the case of all those who were his ministers and advisors. The deeper dilemma of the polity that was necessary for the maintenance of *dharma* in the body politic was that a polity was always located among other polities that could be potentially hostile to it and thus norms of behaviour demanded in relation to its own citizens could not be applied to them. Also, the expansion of the polity's rule or sphere of politi-

cal influence was considered a legitimate aspiration of those who ruled, and thus the perspective of *mokṣa* or transcendence was not only seen as having little relevance to the domain but also as being positively inimical to it.

Similarly, the realm of economy or the production of wealth was again seen as being rooted in a mind that sought infinite profit and did not greatly care about the legitimate means of acquiring it. The exact phrase used for the *vaiśya buddhi* graphically describes this: '*asankhyāta dhana lāthakārīṇī buddhi*'. However, there were some restrictions imposed on the ways of acquiring wealth which seem to be totally absent in the means of acquiring political power or expanding it to the greatest possible extent. Also, the wealth that was acquired could be rendered meritorious by the uses to which it was put, and hence emphasis was laid primarily on the religious and philanthropic activities for which it was to be utilized.

There is some parallel to this also in the case of political power, as it was supposed to be used for the maintenance, propagation, and enhancement of *dharma*, but this always came against the radical division between members of the home polity towards whom there was such an obligation and all those of other polities who constituted the objects of conquest through war or other such means.

The infusion of moral considerations or the realm of *dharma* in those which belonged to politics and economics has thus always been a problem, though it is also realized that without some such infusion these realms can neither be legitimized nor considered to be 'human' activities. The transcendent dimension of human existence, however, cuts across even the moral one as the long standing discussion and tension between *dharma* and *mokṣa* testifies in the Indian tradition. The renunciatory ideal epitomized in the Buddha and the Mahāvira illustrates this pre-eminently.

Yet, both the dilemma and the problematic are old and have been faced and grappled with by almost all the civilizations of the past. Their existence in the present situa-

tion, however, especially in the west, derives from a very different condition that seems to have had no parallel in the past. This derives from two unique factors that distinguish it radically from all similar situations in the past. First, the discovery of a 'methodology of knowing', particularly in the realm of 'nature', or rather that part of nature which we generally call 'material', that is, ostensibly inanimate. The discovery of the methodology of 'knowing' in this domain has led not only to a continuous increase in our knowledge about it but also to a gradual transformation in what is conceived of as the nature of knowledge itself. The constant interplay between imagination, reason, and sense experience, and the correction or modification in each in the light of the other, is an exercise that has resulted in a continuous process of 'knowing', in which thousands of people are constantly and actively engaged all over the world, and where the opening and closure of possibilities is always seen as being relative to the ingenuity of imagining on the one hand, and the ratiocinative and experimental skills on the other.

This, by itself, would have been a radical departure from the past, but as it has gradually become linked to the planned and deliberate transformation of knowledge into technology through engineering skills, and then their further development into economically viable products through managerial and advertising techniques, adds a dimension to the modern enterprise of knowledge which was only marginally present in earlier civilizations.

However, the increasing gap between the success of the methodology invented for acquisition of knowledge of nature and that which may be designated as 'human reality' has created enormous problems resulting from the imbalance between a continually increasing knowledge of nature and ignorance of the nature of human reality in which man is essentially involved and where, at least at the cognitive level, he is obliged to admit that he cannot but be a

part of nature and hence capable of being understood in the same way. The cognitive compulsion to acknowledge the unity of natural and human reality is however only a theoretical compulsion that is existentially denied at every step of human life, at least in so far as it concerns the individual's subjectivity. This is due to the inconvenient but recalcitrant fact that, however much they may be treated as 'natural objects' and sought to be understood through causal knowledge and manipulated on that basis, they refuse to be so 'reduced' and rebut the reduction by their revolt against it. The failure of the Soviet experiment, the most gigantic undertaking of its kind in history, is evidence of this, and there can be little doubt that the western belief in the same paradigm will ultimately also meet the same fate. The only relevant difference between the two seems to lie in the fact that while the one relied on terror, the other relies on greed; but ultimately both tend to treat human beings as manipulable by coercion or temptation, or by a judicious blend of both.

The human reality as existentially experienced is a strange amalgam of both freedom, constraint, and necessity, and when self-consciously reflected upon shows an element of awareness of the transcendent which it can neither affirm with complete faith nor deny with certitude. This paradoxical awareness, however, gives a meaning and significance to the existentially lived life of man which no other dimension of his being seems to give. All previous civilizations, in contrast to the modern western one, have based themselves on this foundational self-reflection which, even if 'illusory', is an inalienable and essential part of human self-consciousness. Besides, as in the realm of consciousness, the distinction between 'illusion' and 'reality' does not normally exist, and in any case, cannot be drawn in terms of truth or falsity but only, if at all, in terms of what it does to the human being who entertains those beliefs and the effect it has on others. It is these that gave

strength to all non-modern civilizations, including the non-modern western one. Any comparative study of civilizations that ignores this diversity would fail to understand the essential diversity in those civilizations. The real drama of the future of all these past civilizations would therefore lie in the way they respond to the attempt at the banishment of transcendence by the modern western civilization based on and derived from the centrality of the newly discovered methodology of understanding nature and translating it in terms of a technology that is primarily concerned with the multiplication, diversification, and satisfaction of human wants relating to the vital domain of his being. It is significant, in this regard, to dwell on the fact that the whole of the modern western civilization has hardly produced any outstanding spiritual personality over the past three hundred years of its existence. It has nurtured great scientists, artists, writers, sportsmen, and even persons of extraordinary moral consciousness, but one looks in vain for a spiritual personality of the stature of, say, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharishi or even a personality like Gandhi who though not exactly a saint in the traditional sense of the term, was a radical mutation even in the history of India's spirituality where there had never been a dearth of them at any time in its long history.

But this, however true, should not blind us to the fact that the modern western civilization has not only apprehended new values and given them concrete shape in institutional and legal forms, but also introduced a new dimension of the transcendental without acknowledging it to be such. This relates to the vision where ideal values are asymptotically realized through infinite time on the basis of the increasing knowledge about nature, man, society, and polity, which are seen as global in their scope and as comprehending the whole of the human race in their purview, including all those sections of humanity that had so far been neglected such as women, children, and the

labouring classes in general. Also, a more complex, richer, and many-sided reality of man has been accepted without reservation, as had seldom been the case in any civilization in the past. There seems also to be a vague awareness that each of these dimensions has an immanent ideal value within it that demands to be pursued and realized over time. However, as the awareness itself has not been clearly formulated, the problem of the interrelationship of the ideal values immanent in the various domains has not received any sustained or focussed attention.

Classical Indian thought has termed this dimension collectively as *aiśvarya* or *abhyudaya* and contrasted it with *niḥśreyasa* or *apavarga*. Indeed, the *Vaiśeṣika sūtras* define *dharma* as that which leads to both *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*, but somehow the idea of *aiśvarya* or *abhyudaya* in its complexity or diversity was not explored in the Indian tradition. Nor was it realized that there is a transcendental value dimension involved in each of the diverse realms of *aiśvarya* and *abhyudaya* that necessarily belong to the human personality in its various aspects. Yet, while classical Indian thought seems to have neglected or at least not clearly articulated the transcendence involved in the diverse empirical pursuits of man which modern western civilization seems to have done, it is equally clear that the latter seems to have completely missed that other dimension of transcendence which most other civilizations pursued so relentlessly in the past and which is epitomized in the notions of *niḥśreyasa* and *apavarga* in the Indian tradition. Nor does the modern western civilization seem to have realized the transcendentality of its own pursuits, for such a realization would have affected and transformed them radically.

The challenge to the older civilizations, then, is from the new values apprehended by the modern western civilization, and the dimension of transcendence it appears to be pursuing in its Faustian quest. How they will respond to

these and relate them to their own perception of transcendence as essentially trans-empirical, it is impossible to foretell. This much is certain, however, that each living civilization will respond in its own way and pursue its own synthesis between the two dimensions of transcendence to which man essentially belongs. Indeed, in the past there has been significant diversity in both the ideal of transcendence and the way it has been pursued not only in different civilizations but even in the same one. Also, the struggle between 'civilization' and 'civilizations' has been continuous, just as there has been between 'cultures' and 'civilization'. A civilization normally comprehends a plurality of cultures which, without losing their identity or some sort of competition between them, still belong and are proud to belong to the same civilization. Social anthropologists have termed them 'little traditions' and 'great traditions', but it would perhaps be more meaningful to see the relationship in terms of what are generally known as 'civilization' and 'cultures'. The relationship, it should be remembered, is not only vague but also full of tensions such as the desire to belong and be counted as a part of something larger than an individual per se, and is constantly in conflict with the desire to distinguish and preserve the identity of the distinctive culture to which one belongs. The situation becomes a little easier when the civilization itself values diversity, difference, and plurality as a part of its own *weltanschauung* and when it acknowledges the desirability of the differences and the desirability of cultures pursuing their own ways of life to the largest degree possible within the civilizational matrix that has its own projects to pursue. This it sees as being essentially fulfilled in a richer way by the diverse ways in which different cultures pursue their own life styles that imbue them with meaning and significance in their day to day life. The relation between 'civilization' and 'civilizations' may also be conceived of in the same way, though there are obvious differences between

the two. Yet, it would perhaps be equally true to say that all civilizations have to a certain extent, been aware of the larger humanity shared by all human beings and have tried in some ways to relate to this. The relationship can of course be hindered or facilitated by the civilization's deepest perception of what it is to be a human being and how much diversity or difference can be tolerated or even valued.

Mukund Lath has in this context distinguished between what he has called *dhun* cultures and *rāga* cultures. The terms are taken from music but point to a significant difference at the heart of cultures and civilizations. A '*dhun*' in music, according to him, is a mode of musical composition and presentation that is supposed to be preserved intact without any innovation or variation from the norm that the musical pattern has set for itself and which ought only to be repeated without, as far as possible, any variations, for it is in this continuous repetition that the fulfillment of both the creator and the listener lies. The Vedic hymns are perhaps the best illustrations of this, for not only are the words and syllables supposed to be preserved intact but also the way they were expected to be chanted, for any variation would destroy the efficacy of a *mantra* in achieving the purpose for which it was being recited. The technical words for these in the tradition were *śabdānupūrvi*, *varṇānupūrvi*, and *swarānupūrvi*, all of which were expected to be kept completely unaltered in Vedic recitation, and this it is believed was maintained over the three to four millennia of their existence.

The *rāga*, on the other hand, revels in improvisation and innovation. It looks askance at repetition and every time it is played by a master something different is expected and, if it is not found, there is a sense of disappointment and a feeling that something has been lacking in the creativity and the artistry of the master. Lath has used the term *alāpa* from the Indian musicological tradition to describe this valuation of innovation and improvisation in the field of

music and has suggested that it could be extended to other areas of culture, for it might provide a better understanding of them when seen in this way. The distinction can perhaps be better grasped by those who are not familiar with the Indian musical tradition if they recall the distinction between modern jazz and classical music in the western tradition, even though there is a problem as the latter must be 'interpreted' and in the western tradition, the interpretation of the musical text is supposed to be as important as the text itself. But, as everyone knows, there is always the problem of being 'true' to the text and it is always difficult to know what this 'being true to the text' really implies. In any case, the distinction which Lath is pointing out is fairly clear particularly if one treats it as an 'ideal type' in Weber's sense and one can try to understand civilizations in its terms.

But, while it is true that the dominant character of a civilization may be understood in terms of the ideal type thus constructed, even then it should be borne in mind that there are always areas in a civilization where deviation, difference, and innovation is permitted or tolerated or even appreciated to a greater degree than in certain others and it would be interesting to map the areas within a civilization that welcome and tolerate deviance and difference, and others that do not. Strangely, however, in the context of the problem of the identity of a civilization, it would appear that the civilization 'identifies' itself more with that in which deviation is unwelcome rather than where it permits, tolerates, and welcomes it.

Yet this, if accepted, would result in the paradox that the 'identity' which is cherished is that where no 'creativity' obtains, for to be creative means to innovate, to explore, to develop in directions that were not apprehended before or, if apprehended, were not pursued. On the other hand, the history of a civilization may be seen in terms of the different areas in which it has successively valued *dhun* over

rāga. Yet, it should not be difficult to conceive of a civilization that fundamentally values *rāga* over *dhun* and identifies itself with it at its deepest level, or tries to extend the area where *alāpa* predominates over those where it does not.

The relation between the two may be seen at least from the perspective of civilizations as the relation between necessity and freedom, since both are necessary for human living. The areas of 'necessity' may be seen as conditioning the areas of freedom. After all, even a *rāga* has to have some structure, some differentiating character if it is to be different from other *rāgas*. If this is accepted, then the innovation and improvisation occurs within a limit that is set by the structure which defines a particular *rāga* and differentiates it from others.

The musical analogy is, however, only partially helpful in understanding the problem relating to the identity of civilizations for the realms of necessity should be seen as akin to the notes that the human voice can produce or the colours, if we take our example from the realm of painting that the human eye can see. The limitation imposed by the fact that the human ear can only hear sounds within a certain range, or the eye particular colours, does not exactly restrict the freedom of the musician or the painter as a *rāga* or a *dhun* does. There is of course a difference in architecture, where the availability of new material allows more freedom to the architect than was possible with the limited materials available earlier. It is, however, difficult to say whether the enlargement of freedom emanating from the availability of new materials really facilitates the creation of new aesthetic forms that were not possible with the use of the earlier material for, as is well known, neither the writer, painter, or musician have ever been constrained by the limited vocabulary or colours or notes at their command. This has been known in literature for a long time, for the basic vocabulary of words has almost always been limited even though writers have occasionally invented new words, generally relying for their effects on an unexpected juxtaposition of words that were already in current use in the lan-

guage. In any event, the distinction which Lath has pointed out is both interesting in itself and can be profitably used to understand not only the various areas of a civilization, but also the civilization as a whole and the changes that have overtaken it in time.

The identity of a civilization, like the identity of a person, though normally seen in terms of the past, may however also be seen in terms of the future. This becomes even more relevant when one sees a civilization in terms of its projects and visions in their unfoldment in time, for like all ideal values, projects and visions are not exhausted in time and manifest their immense potentialities ever anew as human beings try to concretize them in the empirical world. What is perhaps even more important than this is the little noticed fact that the ideal values or the project and visions themselves are not isolated monadic entities, but form an interactive whole where each modifies and influences the other. Thus, the encounters of all the past civilizations with the modern western one is bound to result in the unfoldment of new potentialities in the valuational projects and visions of those civilizations and radically modify them, just as a new metaphor unfolds hidden meanings that were unsuspected before the creative writer used it for the first time. The story of past civilizations is thus an open book where it is impossible to know what future chapters are yet to be written, but it may be safely said that if the memory or *smṛti*, as I have called it, is not lost and if it is a 'living' presence in the present giving meaning to what is newly encountered in all dimensions of experience, then it can provide that continuity in terms of cognition, connotation, and feeling which gives 'identity' to a civilization over time.

 4

Transformations in the Seeking of Man: Consciousness to Self-Consciousness and from Culture to Civilization

Civilizations are few; cultures many. Cultures can be independent of civilizations, but a civilization is always constituted by cultures though transcending them in an essential sense. Culture is coterminous with human reality, for one can scarcely conceive of man without language which is itself intimately related to culture. Language is a distinctively human product that in its 'artificiality' transcends nature and achieves communication and expressiveness of an order far beyond anything achieved in the animal world. All cultures, are thus trans-natural and have what we have called '*śilpa*' or a repertoire of skills, '*smṛti*', or memory that preserves what was heard from others, and in which stories prominently figure of the heroes of a culture as exemplars of behaviour or what has been called *sadācāra* in the Indian tradition. All this is ultimately presented to the individual self for preservation, transmission, and development, and judged on the basis of how far it is satisfactory, and if found to be unsatisfactory in any particular way, how it should be modified. This has been termed '*ātmatuṣṭi*' in the Indian tradition, and though it does not exactly mean what I have said, it does not conflict with it.

These and many other such things exist in all cultures, but what is perhaps distinctive of a civilization is that here self-consciousness predominates over consciousness and re-