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LANGUAGE, TRADITION AND MODERN CIVILIZATION - RAMCHANDRA GANDHI, Editor

LANGUAGE TRADITION & MODERN CIVILIZATION

LANGUAGE, TRADITION
& MODERN CIVILIZATION

Edited by
RAMCHANDRA GANDHI

INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATIONS

The present book is the outcome of a Seminar on *Language, Tradition and Modern Civilization* held in New Delhi in December 1979.

Eminent thinkers representing diverse intellectual disciplines have discussed variegated themes such as *Atom and Self, Freedom and Necessity, Some aspects of the Indian Inner World, Svaraj, Earthquake in Bihar : The Transfiguration of Karma, Whither Indian Philosophy?, Whither Indian Social Science?*, etc. However, the issues raised and the subsequent discussions under those diverse themes illustrate that the understanding of tradition and that of modern civilization implicate each other. Such an understanding would provide a larger framework of thought as well as a kind of direction which, one hopes, would enable one to face the intellectual challenges of our times.

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LANGUAGE, TRADITION
AND
MODERN CIVILIZATION

Edited by
Ramchandra Gandhi



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EDITORS' PREFACE

The Indian Philosophical Quarterly is committed to the promotion of independent philosophical thinking in India today irrespective of doctrinal commitment or affiliations. Such an endeavour requires the creation of a national forum of philosophical investigations at advanced levels which would be committed to the achievement of structures of communication between classical perspectives, Indian and Western, and Contemporary problems, thus leading to the formation of a climate of relevance for our philosophical efforts.

As part of this objective the Indian Philosophical Quarterly intends to bring out a series of publications in Philosophy to be called Indian Philosophical Quarterly Publications. The series will be devoted to publishing monographs, collection of articles, anthologies, original explorations and critical studies of specific problems or thinkers. We hope that such publications would provide a forum for scholars in our country to make available the results of their studies and reflections to a wider public. The individual monographs, however, would represent only the points of view of the authors concerned; they do not necessarily represent the editorial view point.

We are happy to release our fifth publication, "*Language, Tradition and Modern Civilization*" edited by Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi. The papers included in this publication were presented at a seminar on *Language, Tradition and Modern Civilization* held at New Delhi in December, 1979.

We are thankful to Prof. Ramchandra Gandhi for having kindly given us permission to publish the proceedings under the auspices of I. P. Q. Publication Series. The Department of Philosophy, University of Poona has co-sponsored the present publication as part of the publication programme under University Leadership Programme sanctioned by the U. G. C. We are thankful to Dr. S. S. Deshpande, Co-ordinator, U. L. P. who has been solely incharge in bringing out the present publication.

POONA,
August 1983.

S. S. BARNINGAY
RAJENDRA PRASAD
Editors
Indian Philosophical Quarterly

FOREWORD

I had participated in the seminar on *Language, Tradition and Modern Civilization*, and it was indeed a very instructive and enjoyable experience to go through the proceedings of the seminar. And I realized how these two together were much better than the seminar alone, or the proceedings alone. I could not help feeling and saying to myself : this is it ! I am sure that those who only read the proceedings will not altogether miss the liveliness of the discussion. Let me explain.

The papers and the discussions present some very important issues in the traditional and modern perspective (it cannot be too much emphasized that this is a typical distinction though it may have a historical context) both in their fundamentals and in detail. The proceedings show that the participants had a long, deep and genuine concern (not generated merely by or for the seminar) for not only the specific issues they were discussing, but the larger issues of the theme of the seminar. It would be unfair, in my opinion, to describe Professor Gandhi's role merely as an editor though as such also he has done a purposeful and effective job : he had carefully and thoughtfully formulated the theme of the seminar; he had also succeeded in collecting a group that could do justice to the theme. Equally, if not more important, are the editorial footnotes and the provocations (courtesy Professor A. K. Saran), though the former are no less provocative than the latter; and the latter are no less marked by editorial skill than the former. The result is a rich intellectual feast.

The papers and the discussions show a boldness which removes the shackles — the timidity and one-sidedness — of both traditionalism and modernism; but they do not discourage reflection, rather they demand and stimulate reflection both on the fundamentals and the details and their relationship. And if one follows the direction, one finds oneself face to face with the great challenge — can one have best of both the worlds — traditional and modern? [Or are there two worlds? (Professor A. K. Saran)] can one have one to the exclusion of the other, theoretically and practically? The

search and the fight for our soul individual and national, if not that of humanity itself, takes shape; and perhaps we realise that, however difficult, it need not be a hopeless search or fight.

I am sure that this could serve as basic material for reflection in depth on some of the major issues of our times without preconceived notions. (The seminar proceedings do not give an answer, but they show that the traditional approach is not a lost cause.) As such, the proceedings very eminently serve the purpose that Professor Gandhi had in mind.

For myself, I am indeed grateful to Professor Gandhi for inviting me to this adventure; and I would be surprised if many more would not feel in the same way.

Department of Philosophy,
University of Poona, Pune.

K. J. SHAH

INTRODUCTION

What is brought together here is a lightly edited transcript of the tape-record of a seminar on the theme '*Language, Tradition and Modern Civilization*' which the Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad (of which I was then in charge), organised in Delhi during the month of December, 1979, over a period of three days — December 22, 23, 24 — with the aid of facilities provided by the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Indian National Science Academy in the way of conference rooms and catering, and with the aid of funds provided by the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad. Acute shortage of funds had necessitated holding the seminar in Delhi, and not in Hyderabad as originally planned, because the cost of bringing participants to Delhi was going to be less than half the cost of transporting them to Hyderabad. The University of Hyderabad most impressively met the travel expenses of all the students of the Department of Philosophy, eighteen of them, who, along with typist Shri V. Gopinath and assistant Shri. P. Laxminarasaiiah, made the whole exercise possible. The burden of tape-recording fell squarely upon M. Phil. student Lekha Singh, and the burden of preparing the first typescript of this volume upon Shri. V. Gopinath and Shri D. V. Ramanaiah. To all concerned who helped at various stages of the seminar in various ways great gratitude is due and here expressed, especially to Shri Vinay Jain for transcribing all the tapes accurately and speedily.

Sometimes discussions at academic seminars of a general philosophical nature in our country are quite refreshingly unhackneyed and witness to our anguished and yet adventurous search for autonomy — intellectual, political, spiritual, civilisational autonomy in the modern world — but no adequate records of these discussions are made, and consequently a large section of our intelligentsia, especially students, do not participate even vicariously in this soul-seeking adventure and anguish of Indian thought today. In the judgement of many participants and observers, the seminar whose proceedings are recorded in this volume in only a mildly edited form was instructive precisely because it stimulated soul-

seeking and loud thinking and plain speaking on issues as vital to the growth of our country in truth and justice as those generated by the contrasts and contradictions between tradition and modern civilization, and pertaining to the difficulty of devising a language capable of mediating between the two in war and rousing them from complacency in peace. I am grateful to the Department of Philosophy, Poona University, for publishing this record of the seminar under the joint auspices of the 'University Leadership Programme' and Indian Philosophical Quarterly and hope that the work will reach a wide cross-section of philosophically oriented scholars and thinkers in many spheres of intellectual activity, especially in India, and that it would stimulate further and more comprehensive thought on the themes with which it deals.

Nearly a hundred people came to the Delhi seminar, many of them on each of the three days, participating in both the morning and afternoon sessions among whom special gratitude is owed to Professor D. S. Kothari, distinguished educationist and former Professor of Physics at Delhi University and one of the seminar lecturers, whose encouragement at all stages of the conception and conduct of the seminar was invaluable; and to Professor Sir Peter Strawson, Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford, another seminar lecturer, who, with Lady Strawson, brought to the seminar memories of Oxford where some of the participants had first met and got to know and like them. Other seminar lecturers and initiators of discussion were Professor A. K. Saran, myself, Dr. Sudhir Kakar, Professor Daya Krishna, Professor K. J. Shah, and Professor T. N. Madan. The lectures and initiations were followed by intensive discussions, fully recorded here.

The promise of the whole enterprise was great, and one can only hope that this promise was to a fair extent fulfilled. What can be said with confidence is that the exercise was undertaken in earnest by all concerned and there was something self-justifying about the idea of doing philosophy in a way not narrowly confined to technical and parochial methodological investigations, confronting as well as one could all the intricate and fundamental questions for human thought suggested by the title of the seminar, and also about the idea that in a poor country like ours all seminars are expensive, and that they can be justified only in terms of their

general educational and intellectual usefulness. May students especially benefit from this experiment.

Indian Institute
of
Education,
Pune,
September 1982.
[Formerly
Professor and Head
of the Deptt. of Philosophy,
Central University,
Hyderabad.]

RAMCHANDRA GANDHI

P. S. —Thanks are due to Professor A. K. Saran for permission to use quotations from his work *ILLUMINATIONS : A School for the Regeneration of Man's Experience, Imagination and Intellect. A Proposal (in two Parts)*. These and other quotations from creative thinkers are appended at the end of the each section under the heading 'Provocations', so as to provoke further thought among readers on the questions raised in the seminar record.

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Section I

ATOM AND SELF

Lecture by : **D. S. KOTHARI**

Chairman : **K. J. SHAH**

K. J. SHAH :

Friends, I am very grateful to Professor Gandhi for putting me in this position, although I am not sure of my suitability. I request Professor Kothari to proceed with his talk.

D. S. KOTHARI :

Mr. Chairman, Professor Strawson, Professor Gandhi and friends,

My first thought is sincerely to thank you for this great honour of inviting me to participate, and also for putting my talk as the very first one. I must, at the very outset, confess to a great deal of diffidence in speaking before this distinguished audience on a subject I am not entirely sure falls within the scope of your deliberations, and which is not just physics but beyond it too. The subject given to me is 'Atom and Self': the atom something that belongs to physics, and the self primarily to metaphysics.

Does modern physics say anything new about the atom? I think one can essentially sum up the 20th century concept of the atom by saying that the atom is no longer a metaphysical entity as it once was for, say, Newton or even to some extent, Democritus. Democritus thought of the atom as providing an explanation not only for matter and material phenomena but also for consciousness. He made no distinction between matter and consciousness – the atom was an entity which explained both. The Indian philosophical concept of the atom is similar: the atom is basically a metaphysical

entity explaining both matter and self. Newton's concept, too, was metaphysical. In his book on Optics he answers the question of why the atom is indivisible with the words "What God made as one no man can put asunder". So the stability of the atom was explained metaphysically—God made it so, and thus it was indivisible.

In the 20th century, however, the atom has become part of physics. How has this come about? This has come about because size has been given an absolute sense in modern physics. 'Big' and 'Small' are no longer relative terms. Normally they are taken as relative: this piece of chalk is big compared to the atom but small compared to the earth. But then this brings difficulties at the level of the atom—the atom would be very small compared to everyday things, but large compared to the parts we could imagine it to be made of. And then those small parts could be thought of as composed of smaller parts still, and so on, ad infinitum. In other words, no explanation of the atom would be possible, because explanation in terms of smaller parts would bring up the question of how to explain the smaller parts in terms of smaller parts still etc. What modern physics has done is to give absolute meaning to size: an atom is small in an absolute sense, and everyday objects are large in an absolute sense.¹

What does this mean? Any observation we make necessarily disturbs the phenomena to be observed, if the phenomena are small in the absolute sense. If I look at the moon or this ball, it makes no difference to their state, so we say they are big in the absolute sense; but an atomic object is absolutely small, because every act of observation, no matter how ideal it may be or how perfect the instrument, inherently disturbs the thing observed. This disturbance cannot be ignored for small objects: the change of state is appreciable at the atomic level. There is an inevitable disturbance accompanying every observation. Planck's constant 'h' in modern physics adumbrates this truth.

Psychological experience is similar. When somebody is present, when there is a watcher, our thoughts and actions are greatly influenced by that fact. For example, when a physicist speaks before a group of philosophers, the things he thought he

1. The atom is at least very little, absolutely little—only man is nothing.—Ed.

knew clearly begin to fade away. So the act of observation does influence the psychological state.

We can pursue this analogy a little further. We speak of the atom as having certain energy levels or states. When it is in the lowest or ground state, it has a certain energy, when it is in the excited state it has a different, higher energy, and the whole system is discrete. That is, from State 1 it can go to State 2 or State 3 etc., but not any arbitrary level in between. The relevant point here is this discreteness of energy states, the lack of continuity. There is a similarity of this phenomenon with that of thinking. When there is a thought in my mind, and the next moment, another, how does this transition take place? It is a jump—a quantum leap like that of the atom. Thinking is not a continuous process but takes place discretely, otherwise it would just not be possible. If the transition was continuous, like points on a line, then there would be an infinite number of thoughts intervening, and we would not be able to think at all. Thinking implies sudden jumps, and how this jump takes place cannot be analysed by thought itself. The understanding of the transition is not analysable—it is beyond it, and this is intrinsic to the nature of mind just as quantum jumps are inherent to the atom.²

This in turn implies that the transition of mind from one thought to another contains an element of irrationality, since it cannot be analysed by reason. Hence, thinking is a strange mixture of rationality and irrationality. If I pursue the point further, it leaves open the possibility, say, of the concept of a supermind, or different minds communicating and so on, through this irrational phase that is always present in a sequence of thought.³

The interaction between the atom and the self, between matter and psyche, or mind, is the greatest of all mysteries. I use the word 'mind' here as distinct from the brain, which is just an aggregate of atoms, although highly intricate and complex. The atom is localisable in space and time, it is describable in terms of energy

2. Is there not a quantum jump involved in reincarnation? There is no continuity in our advance towards Moksa, the operation of Grace becoming therefore intelligible.—Ed.

3. We must abide in the thought-free brief intervening space between sleep and wakefulness, the space of freedom between any two thoughts, if we would know the Self, Atman-Brahman, thought Sri Ramana Maharshi.—Ed.

and motion; but mind, I assume, is not an entity in space-time, not a 'matter-energy' concept – it is outside the material world. I bring this up because things like pleasure and pain, love and hatred are not reducible to concepts belonging to science. The basic concepts of science are space-time and matter – energy and we cannot interpret the characteristics of the self like happiness or sorrow or the idea of purpose, in their terms. If I ask "What are the stars made of?", it is a question that concerns the atom, but if I ask "Why are there stars in the sky?" or "Why is the sky beautiful?" Science cannot answer my questions. Beauty is not explainable by science. So there are some things in the universe which do not belong to the realm of science, but to that of the self or mind.

The question arises – how can matter interact with non-matter, how can the atom interact with the self? That there is an interaction is obvious: When I speak, my mind is exercising a certain sense of freedom, for, if I like, I can stop here. So when I am speaking, I believe – we all believe – that it is my mind which is determining the sentence. But the sentence you hear is due to the vibration of my vocal chords, the motion of air, etc. In other words, mind influencing matter is a commonplace phenomenon, and every happening we are conscious of reflects this mind-matter interaction. Yet nothing is more mysterious than how this interaction takes place, and modern science provides not even the remotest clue to understanding it, as some of the greatest scientists like Schrodinger have pointed out.

The next point I would like to make is that within physics there is no place for metaphysics, for within physics, reason reigns supreme and experiment, observation, mathematics alone determine explanation. Yet it is recognised that the development of physics, particularly if it concerns a change in the basic framework, largely takes place through one's being aware of the metaphysical situation. We can say that in the scaffolding of physics there is metaphysics, but in its building, none. And as physics expands, more and more metaphysical territory comes within its fold: Newton's atom, once metaphysical, has become part of physics. One could even say that physics has as its core a metaphysical framework, in a certain sense.

That both physics and metaphysics are essential for human life is obvious. Anti-physics, or a contradiction of physics has,

or should have, no place in human thinking. Here I am reminded of a story I once read in my childhood from a book on magic. It had the title 'How to create life out of nothing'. It said that if you took some cow-dung and put it in the dark, scorpions would be spontaneously produced after some time. I believed in the story then because I was ignorant of physics and biology. Much later I read a European version of the same story (these stories were prevalent up to the 17th century and even later) which said that if you took a jar of grain, stuffed it with dirty linen and put it for 21 days in a corner of the room, a mouse would appear in the jar, which demonstrated the creation of a mouse from grain. A modern version of the same story runs like this: Take 10^{80} particles – electrons, protons, neutrons – put them into empty space and wait, not for 21 days but for ten thousand million years, and you will find at the end of the period a number of physicists and metaphysicians sitting in a room discussing their problems.⁴

The earlier childhood story I believed because I did not know physics; this modern story which I studied at Cambridge much later, I believed because I did not know metaphysics. So we do need both, and when we read the leading scientist-thinkers, we realise that to believe in this kind of story is to make a very great mistake. A leading physical chemist of our time says: "To deny the reality of the self, of the inner world, is a flat negation of all that is immediate in existence. To minimise its significance is to deprecate the very purpose of living, and to explain it away as a product of Darwinian natural selection is a plain fallacy."

One recognizes more and more that as one's understanding of nature advances, the very concept of understanding undergoes modification. What we mean by understanding is constantly changing as our association with nature increases. Take the concept of time. For Newton it was something that continues to flow, and one could not do anything to it. In other words, it was, till Einstein, more noumenon than phenomenon. But now, after relativity, time has become a phenomenon with a start and an end, the duration being 60 billion years. So we are introducing now in physical thinking the concept of timelessness: time must start from

4. Some mystics have talked about the absolute terrifying patience of God.—Ed.

no-time. What is beyond time we cannot grasp at all, but the concept is necessary because relativity demands that time have a start and an end.

Even more profound than this is the concept of the reality of matter itself. Let me give you an example. If I have a piece of chalk, and I have two compartments, I can put it in either one compartment or the other. But experimental evidence forces us to acknowledge that when we are dealing with small objects—say electrons—then a situation is possible where the same object is present in *both* compartments *simultaneously*. I am not saying that there are two atoms, or that one atom is in one place at one time and at another place at some other time, but that the same atom is in both places at the same time. This looks crazy, but it is so.⁵ And the point is that language here fails to describe this radically new situation. Ordinary language is meant to describe our experience of everyday things, i.e., it deals with large objects. It is totally inadequate at the micro-level, where only mathematics can describe the state of things.

This situation provides us with an analogy for enlarging our understanding of the self. I can start by saying that we cannot localise the self, that the same self is everywhere at the same time, and so on. When he was asked where the soul was located, Kant replied that it was a crooked question because the soul was not in space-time. So there are levels of understanding, and modern physics introduces this idea of different levels of understanding, or better still, different levels of understanding reality. We have our normal Newtonian world of familiar objects. Then we have the Einsteinian world of relativity, where absolute time has no meaning. The moment we destroy the concept of absolute time, the idea of change also vanishes and becomes illusion, which corresponds to the metaphysical system like Vedanta etc. Next we have reality as seen through quantum physics, where we come across a situation in which an object is here and there simultaneously—a totally new concept. As we proceed further to higher states of reality, we might reach a stage where direct experience of the psyche is possible, the yogic experience in which the sense of 'I'—*ahankara*—tendes to zero.

5. Advaita involves the supposition of the mysterious simultaneous many-centredness of the same Atman-Brahman.—Ed.

It is said that new advances in physics and an appreciation of the higher levels of reality will depend upon our getting crazy ideas. Bohr once said that the trouble with many physicists was not that their ideas were crazy, but that they were not crazy enough. I may even hazard the judgement that metaphysics today is not as exciting as quantum physics because it has given up some of its crazy ideas, and the new ideas in metaphysics are not crazy enough. Thank you.

DISCUSSION

K. J. SHAH :

Professor Kothari's lecture, to my mind, focuses our attention on a tension between modern science and certain other ways of thought. I do not like to distinguish between them as being traditional or modern, because these words can be understood in so many different ways. What I would like to suggest is that there are two different trends of thought, two different ways of thinking about issues. The need is to articulate and appraise them and see how far one can go in one direction or the other, or choose between them. I do not know what would be the appropriate terms to describe these two trends of thought. We might, for our purposes, stick to the terms 'traditional' and 'modern', but more as labels rather than as clear meanings.

I think Professor Kothari's stories of creation make the point in a very significant manner, and throw out a challenge to consider the different ways of thinking much more thoroughly and seriously.

D. S. KOTHARI :

There is a question I would like to put : "Does there exist a self outside the body ?" Of course, I am not thinking of the self here as something like a bird in a cage—that is too native a picture, and we can discard it as too simplistic because the self is non-corporeal and there is no question of locating it in space-time. But is there an entity, call it soul or psyche or mind, which is different from matter, or is matter everything and self a by-product, an epiphenomenon of it ?

There are four alternative answers to this question : first, yes, there exists a separate self; second, no it doesn't: all that exists is an epiphenomenon of matter; third, partly yes and partly no, which implies a sense of complementarity; and there is a fourth answer which might say that we do not want to respond at all because it is too silly a question.⁶

ASHOK KELKAR :

I was rather puzzled that Professor Kothari wanted to relate the atom and the self directly, without bringing in life. I would think the first problem we have to tackle is the relation between matter and life, and then the relation between life and the self. Perhaps we would have a more fruitful discussion of matter and self after we have tackled both these questions.

D. S. KOTHARI :

At one time, life and soul were considered together, and matter separate. Life and matter go together. Living phenomena are essentially no different from the phenomena in a test-tube. The entity that stands apart from matter in that sense, is not life but mind or psyche.

DHARMENDRA GOEL :

I have chosen the third of Professor Kothari's alternatives, and I would like to make a few remarks on why I gave the yes-and-no response to the question of whether there exists a self other than the atom, the atom being a paradigm case of all that is body.

There is certainly no doubt that it would be difficult to imagine someone from Professor Kothari's specialisation conceiving of something that is not intelligible in terms of the laws of nature, because in physics, reason prevails, and if we are reasonable, then we have observation and calculation. But nevertheless, we have something other than this also, which is worth investigating. Language is one such realm, and mathematics another. The elements of a number system and the alphabets of a language manage

6. Hands were raised at this point in answer to Professor Kothari's question, some regarding the question and the response as unfair.—Ed.

to reproduce all kinds of structures in different ways. Thus it is difficult to give the answer 'No' to Prof. Kothari's question, although it would be equally hazardous to go in for 'Yes'.

Actually it is very essential here to enter into the question of what we mean by 'existence'. Unless we agree with the view that commonsense existence is an un-problematic concept, and that commonsense is always right, we have to see what exactly is involved in our usage of the term. Professor Kothari has, in his own way, talked of the 'crazy' idea of the atom being in two compartments at the same time, and we, on our part, have to reflect on the nature of the isomorphism between reasoning and the objects of reasoning, between explanation and observation, which is a little more intricate. As such, to suggest that there is no isomorphism between the objects of enquiry and its tools, between the presuppositions of enquiry and its results, would possibly be a brand of scepticism that many would accept, but many others might not. But if we mean by self that which leads to God or some such thing, it would be rather vague and indefinite.

MOHINI MULLICK :

I am a bit confused as to what the major thrust of Professor Kothari's talk was. It appeared to me that he started at an ontological level, where he discussed two parallel ontological realms. After a while he appeared to have shifted to a question which, I personally find more interesting but perhaps we are not focusing on it at the moment, which was a methodological one. It was really a shift from the atom and self to physics and metaphysics, i. e., to the languages. This led us on to the methodological question of whether we should try and understand the universe through the instruments science provides us, or through those provided by, say, metaphysics. Perhaps these questions are related, but I feel we are not getting a focus for discussion because there are two types of questions raised. Would you like us to talk about a science or method of understanding the universe, self or no self ?

Your talk ended on an interesting note about metaphysics not being crazy enough. I think there is a great deal to be said there. Quantum physicists are now becoming much more adventurous than metaphysicians are.

D. S. KOTHARI :

The self, the 'I' has no part within science whatsoever—that is the methodology of science. And it is this which gives objectivity and strength to science. But then it does involve a very real sacrifice if the self or 'I' or soul is an entity which we regard as real as the atom. For those who consider the mind or self as an epiphenomenon, the sacrifice is not large. The essential question, thus, is whether there are two realities or only one. If there is one reality, then, taking the materialist position, it is matter, with mind as a secondary derivative phenomenon. But the point I am putting forward is that at the human level we must recognize two realities—the atom and the self—both of which are equally real. Within the study of matter the self has no place, yet it provides a beacon light to the direction we should move in. The self is not in the building of physics, but provides the scaffolding.

I will end by saying that if anybody who has heard my talk does not feel confused, it will have been in vain, for I am very much more confused at the end of my talk than I was at the beginning.

ANANTU :

When Professor Kothari mentioned the four alternative responses to the problem he raised, I was quite confused which one to opt for. What surprised me was that I was very clear within me what the answer was. The problem was not in figuring the answer to the question, but in figuring which one to fix my name to. I realized this was because answers relating to questions of the self really fall in the category of a holistic way of thinking, as opposed to picking one out of the whole, which is an analytical way of thinking. And this was, I felt, the real problem we had to tackle. When Professor Shah mentioned in the beginning his dissatisfaction with the terms modern v/s traditional, I found myself completely agreeing with him. To me it makes much more sense if we represent it as analytical, representing the current, western way of thinking, versus holistic, which was the way of thinking of the ancient seers and sages, not only of this country but also of other countries.

Looking at it thus, I find the question of what 20th century science represents also falling in the same category. For example,

let us take a look at what physics tells us about sub-atomic particles. It tells us that the sub-atomic particle is bounded as well as unbounded, which means finite as well as infinite; it is matter as well as energy; it is existing at a particular point as well as not existing at that point: in other words, it provides us contradictions in terms. When we are trying to understand this through language, we are really trying to understand it in the analytical framework, and when we try and express what is happening at the sub-atomic or even the galactic level, when we put it into language, it appears contradictory. But the grasp the scientists have of the phenomena is not self-contradictory. It is when they translate it into the analytical framework that it sounds contradictory. And here is where we have to say that ultimately what is holistic can never really be expressed in analytical terms. This is exactly what we are trying to do in saying yes, no, yes-no, etc., in answer to the question "Is there a Self?" We are trying to put into an analytical framework what is essentially holistic, and has to be understood as a whole. I feel this is one aspect of the problem we should bear in mind.⁷

NIRMAL VERMA :

I cannot conceive of any dichotomy between the self and the body. My soul manifests through my body, my body acquiring a contour of pain or joy through even a little shift or swerve that occurs within the depth of my soul. So I do not agree with what you said about a poet regarding the soul as something beyond himself or beyond the body. On the contrary, he is even sometimes baffled whether he is the one who is observing or whether he is an object being observed. This sort of bafflement intrigues not only a poet but also a scientist and a rationalist in the most crucial moments of bewilderment. And aren't these precisely those moments whether in the realm of thought for a physicist or the realm of fantasy for a poet, where this barrier, this curtain between the atom and the atma disappears? This you will find most revealingly in the way a poet handles a thought as distinct

7. The *saptabhangi* procedure of the Jainas involves baffling possibilities of simultaneous affirmation and denial combined with the possibility of inexpressibility. The choice is not only between different languages, but also between presumptuous talk and metaphysically respectful silence.

from the way of logic a philosopher uses. By that I do not mean that a poet handles it in an irrational manner. He is only using a different kind of rationality from the discursive, analytical way of a scientist. I am reminded of Paul Valery's beautiful discussion of the rationality of the poet and the intuitiveness of the artist—the poetry which is in the heart of science and the science which is in the heart of the intuitive flights of a poet. And I think it is perhaps there that a painting, a poem, a form of art go back to the pre-dichotomous ages of the past, in Europe as well as the East, where the magic quality of apprehending the world and reality was realized both by the scientist as well as the poet. Alchemy and poetry were really not contradictory for a medieval scientist or poet. I think the pain of separation started from the post-Renaissance period, where body and soul were torn asunder. I would request Dr. Kothari to respond to me and let me know if really there is such a dichotomy between two essential aspects of reality which is one. The reality of body and that of soul are essentially aspects of the same reality which I am living every moment of my life, expressing at different moments in different ways. Do these diverse expressions of reality really mean or ought to mean two different entities or realities?

N. RAMA KRISHNA :

It is as a student of science that I address you, Dr. Kothari. My question concerns your statement that some scientific experiments have proved the existence of a particle in two different places at the same time. With no intimidation meant towards you, I doubt the veracity of this statement. Could you provide the references please?

JAGADISH SHARMA :

There is a tendency to remain uncommitted to keep wondering eternally and not articulate oneself at all. That, I suppose, describe my own state of mind in the beginning when I responded to Professor Kothari's question by saying 'Yes'. It was a sort of irresponsible commitment, because I felt I couldn't go on indefinitely depending on my intellect or scepticism, and had to commit myself one way or the other. Yet there had to be kind of reason for my

response, even if it was merely some kind of superstition. I said 'Yes' primarily because if I didn't, I wouldn't be able to hold myself accountable for anything I did or did not do. I would have pleaded that I was helpless, that every action of mine was determined by my psychosomatic condition and that would give me a certain immunity. I realize we are not here to find ultimate answers, so perhaps our expressions could proceed from our superstitions, given the limits of knowledge.

At one point you said the thought process had to be discrete and not continuous because otherwise there would be sub-thoughts between two major thoughts. I do not find that a really convincing way of explaining why thoughts have to be discrete. If William James is to be believed these sub-thoughts are very normal, they have got to be there, and I can't see how they impede the process of thinking. This is just a doubt and a query.

It is not just a question of science or the results of science being communicable. As Shri. Nirmal Verma has pointed out, there are situations where experiences can perhaps be better communicated through modes of language or non-language that are not always rational or logical. For example, rhetoric, which was intended to sway and move people, was an invention not so much of scientists or rational thinkers, but of people who could be rational thinkers and at the same time were poetically inclined. Poetry for example, relies on certain modes of communication which may turn out to be, or are felt to be more effective, like paradox. Paradox is a non-rational but very effective way of communication. Metaphor, too, can come in the same category. Proverbs and axioms, in their very nature, use a language which cannot be described as purely or very largely logical.

Referring to Mr. Verma's allegation of dichotomy, I didn't get the impression that Professor Kothari was postulating a dichotomy. I thought Professor Kothari's attitude was very hospitable to possibilities, and that he was carefully avoiding taking a position. So I wouldn't address such a question to professor Kothari because I wouldn't assume that he assumes a dichotomy.

The other point is, why shouldn't we think in terms of a dichotomy? If we think we have found an answer, if we think there is no dichotomy, then there is no scope for further exploration. I suggest that there be some free-for-all exploration, not taking

positions at all, because it seems to me positions cannot be taken right now.

P. F. STRAWSON :

It seemed to me we were presented with a false choice between accepting the spiritual ego on the one hand and accepting the adequacy of the language of the physical sciences on the other, to describe the whole of reality. I think rejection of one of those two does not imply acceptance of the other.⁸ We ought, rather, to reject them both : not to answer 'Yes' or 'No', and certainly not 'Yes-no', which would be embracing a contradiction. That is why I opted for the last of the four possibilities, i.e., refusing to answer.

However, I would like to ask Professor Kothari a question about the stories of creation he narrated. He said he accepted the first story, rejected it, then studied the second which dealt with particle-interaction but rejected that too in spite of his knowledge of physics and biology. What I didn't understand was, why he did so. Was there some other causal factor? After all, a whole range of facts, cultural and psychological, could presumably emerge, though we need not know how, from beginnings which were describable exhaustively in terms of atomic physics, perhaps. But this wouldn't have the consequence that what emerged had also to be described exhaustively in those terms. So I wasn't clear why he rejected the story he learnt in Cambridge, when at one time he was prepared to accept it.

SUNDARA RAJAN :

I want to take a clue from the Chairman's remark that we must try and formulate the issue as essentially a certain tension between two styles of thinking. To put it in terms of the existence of the atom and the self may be a way of avoiding this tension itself. There are other ways of avoiding it : to formulate it in terms of reason and intuition and so on, but I think we should go back to

8. "Neither the soul of metaphysics, nor the matter of physics, are we." This raises an exciting possibility of a novel understanding of ourselves, and yet is there not always going to remain a baffling Inner/Outer contrast at the heart of this inquiry? —Ed.

a proper formulation of the tension itself, and I would like to suggest a few things here.

I think what is involved as part of the tension is the presence of two different kinds or models of understanding. According to one view, understanding can be assured of its objectivity only if it is free of all subjective traits. The other view is that truth itself has some kind of subjectivity. We must see what there is in our life and experience that explains the presence of both these models of understanding. They are not just haphazardly present—they are rooted in the overall form of our life. If we see the tension as rooted in a larger framework, i. e., in the forms of our experiences and thought, we might perhaps be able to give substance to another remark of Professor Kothari's namely, that out of this very tension a new model of reasoning may emerge. Basically, the question as I would pursue it would be how to explain the genesis of a new conception of rationality out of a tension within reason itself; to find what there is in reason that explains this tension, and what there is in reason that surmounts it too.

DEVAHUTI :

How would a historian respond to the problem of being and not being at the same time and the same place, and to the various permutations and combinations of these words and meanings? I think he or she would respond by considering the validity of various factors together, separately, at the same time and place, not at the same time and place, as the determinant of change or continuity or progress or status quo etc., in the process of history. In other words, such a historian would not insist on the dominance or even the relative dominance of one particular factor, economic, political, aesthetic, religious etc., all the time as the agent of change in history.

B. R. NANDA :

You have used, in contradistinction to matter, three terms : mind, self and God. Would you like to keep these concepts together, or would you like to separate self and God? In the Vedantic concept, the self and God are beyond mind. An analogy given is that to know the self one has to still the mind, just as to

see a stone in a pond, the ripples have to die down. The mind is supposed to be an obstruction to the realisation of the self: Patanjali defines yoga as stillness of the mind. So I would like to know whether you are keeping the self and mind separately or together.

RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

I want to react to something that Professor Strawson said. It seems to me that magic, or the sense of magic, is not so easy to get rid of. The idea that gradualness of process and intricacy of detail will explain what appears to be so difficult to explain, needs support that cannot come from physics alone. I cannot imagine that some physical theory will allay our doubt; that more knowledge of atomic processes and more intricacy and detail will satisfy us. Something has to be said from somewhere else. What I am suggesting is that behind the hope that physical explanation will eventually be adequate lies something else. If we believe in the reality of something very specific — I am putting forward a metaphysical consideration now — a specificity we may not immediately understand, say like particles of matter, then why can't there also be something else very specific but different? If specificity X is supposed to be real and comprehensively explanatory, there might also be specificity Y. It is not at all clear to me that the hope of evolutionary explanation — the support of gradualism in metaphysics and intricacy in physics — is at all adequate. It seems to me that a more surrealistic view is perfectly possible. And I think you will find support for it in mythology, in poetry, and eventually, even in physics. What we are worried about is dualism or pluralism, and we feel that monism plus gradualism will take care of it. This belief calls for support from outside physics.

The kinds of speculation Dr. Kothari brought to our attention are, I think, vital. It is very important to be falsified here, and I found the suggestion about thoughts and atoms, and the necessity for discontinuity there, fascinating. I offer, for what it is worth, a speculation about the absence of the 'I' in material reality. I think the issue is very clearly connected with moral — religious thought — with the absence of *ahamkara* or ego in creation. It is not that there is here in materiality something unfavourable in

comparison with the glorious spiritual ego. I think the utter absence of the 'I' in matter is far superior—a point rather in its favour. Within modes of metaphysical thought one could cease to worry about this and cease to accuse matter of not co-operating with the ego, and celebrate its utter egolessness. I offer this as a speculation because I wanted to feel courageous enough to do so, for one thing. In the absence of clear and adequate metaphysical support for reigning scientific expectations—they are not scientific theories—I would like to suggest that one should not feel embarrassed about wild, and not merely crazy, speculation.

ASHOK KELKAR :

As a footnote to Professor Gandhi I would like to say that the egolessness and selflessness of creative thinking which was alluded to earlier reminds me of a definition by a French author who said that real creativity was being innovative without appearing to be original. The emphasis on originality, for example, which has been there in Western thinking, identifies creativity with oneself, the ego, while real creativity does not insist on originality. I think Einstein's view of creative thinking as something humble and above oneself is apt, notwithstanding the metaphysical or speculative language in which he put this insight. So before we congratulate matter for being egoless or selfless we have to congratulate the creative thinkers among us for being that.

KENNETH GEORGE :

I have had the opportunity to hear philosophers at some gatherings, and I find that philosophical language is really tangential — I didn't grasp a word of it. We were talking of the self and the atom, and four categories were drawn out. I would like to be classified in the group that says 'No' to a proposed self outside. The self is only a product of language—we have created a self for ourselves, and we have been trying to explain everything in specific language. I do not think there is a soul outside or inside man, and if there is, it is in language, in poetry. We have been creators from the very beginning, and we have been trying to create something immortal all along. Is there any self apart from the body?

I would say the body is the self, and if there is any other self, it has been created by the body for its own survival.⁹

D. S. KOTHARI :

Mr. Ramkrishna wanted a reference for the fact that a particle could exist in two places at the same time and I think an appropriate one for this audience would be Heisenberg's 'Physics and Philosophy', Gifford Lectures, 1955, particularly page 170.

Next, the question of why we are discussing these things when there are real questions of poverty and so on : I think the truth is, in the atomic age, problems of poverty, pestilence, population and the war danger cannot be faced unless we face the central issue of whether there is only matter or there is something higher that transcends it. Moral values, let alone spiritual values, hinge upon the existence of something more than the atom. It is very relevant to the human problems of poverty, etc. If there is nothing but the atom, then we are depersonalising the human personality, and this has been largely the danger of current science.

The last question was why I rejected the story of creation. If we reflect a bit, we find that the two stories are essentially the same : one in terms of medieval science and the other in terms of modern science. Firstly, there are scientific reasons for my rejection. Developments during the last twenty years in quantum physics show that consciousness does play a role in physics in a sense totally unenvisaged earlier. We find that even in science we have now to bring in consciousness as distinct from matter, to explain physical phenomena. And that implies an entity outside space-time. The other reason is that even for making sense of the concept of the atom there is required an entity separate from it. That is, on the empirical plane we have to recognize two realities : *purusa* and *prakrti*. Of course, if we go to a higher plane, these two merge into the *Purusottama*. But on the ordinary human plane we must recognize both the material reality which we can call the atom, and the psychic reality which we can call the self.

9. If the soul is that than which no more perfectible reality can be conceived, imagined, invented, then must it not, also something like the Ontological Argument, necessarily be real ?—Ed.

PROVOCATIONS

□ Actuality is incurably atomic.

— WHITEHEAD

□ When I am in any place, I disturb the silence of heaven and earth by my breathing and the beating of my heart.

— SIMONE WEIL

□ Modern higher education in India has totally failed in all normal ways and the universities and all other wings of the educational establishment are working towards the perpetuation and reinforcement of a deadening of the mind and imagination of those who go through them. Independent India has maintained a profound continuity with the British Indian system of education. The British, it could be argued, designed it perhaps with the purpose of perpetuating, in one way or another, the loss of the Indian's dignity; in any case, the system did not embody any concern for the restoration of his dignity. Further, there is the conviction that the ruling elite of independent India inherited from its former masters the task of strengthening inertia and promoting intellectual degeneration and it clings to this alien heritage with a vengeance; it is clear, therefore, that no matter how loud and persistent our talk of radically changing the inherited educational structure, there is no prospect whatsoever of any real transformation being effected by the ruling political and cultural elite. In fact, it is strange and depressing to find that behind the scene all political parties in India reveal an ominous unanimity with regard to this negative conservatism in educational theory, policy and practice....

—From 'ILLUMINATIONS :

A School for the Regeneration of Man's
Experience, Imagination and Intellect'
A. K. SARAN.

□ The human body is the best picture of the human soul.

— WITTGENSTEIN

□ The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inward and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words : " Now death has come; what does it mean ? What is it that is dying ? This body dies." And I at once dramatised the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched out stiff as though *rigor mortis* had set in and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the inquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound could escape, so that neither the word "I" nor any other word could be uttered. " Well then ", I said to myself, " this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am I dead ? Is the body I ? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the ' I ' within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit". All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought process. " I " was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that " I ". From that moment onwards the " I " or Self focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination.

— SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Section II

THE TRADITIONAL VISION OF MAN

Lecture by : A. K. SARAN

Chairman : RAJNI KOTHARI

RAJNI KOTHARI :

Professor Saran is going to talk to you on a subject which is very dear to his heart. The title of the talk is 'The Traditional Vision of Man.'

A. K. SARAN :

My concern, at the outset, is with the characteristics of traditional man. Firstly, traditional man does not draw any distinction between the I and the non-I, between himself and the cosmos. So the traditional vision of man presupposes a certain unity or sympathy between the macrocosm and the microcosm. It may be called an anthropocosmic, or alternatively, a cosmo-anthropomorphic vision of man. Secondly, this vision of man is based on what might be called a doctrine of signatures, or the creative cosmic theory of language. The fundamental principle of this theory or system of knowledge is that the visible is seen as a sign of the invisible, so that knowledge of the visible is possible only in terms of the invisible. It is not a dialectic between the known and the unknown; it is not the unknown that calls forth knowledge, but the invisible, the unknowable. Therefore knowledge and language are always being let, as it were, into a secret.

The characteristic of this vision of man is that its system of knowledge is conceived, ab initio, as a unity. It is not that man's quest for knowledge culminates in a unified system, or that the

need for a unified system may be altogether dispensed with, but that the system of knowledge assumes a centre, which implies a unity at the very outset. Signs are a product of language and knowledge in contemporary theories of language. On the other hand, in the traditional view of language, signs are given and knowledge is the product, being let into the secret of these signs. So the fundamental postulate on which the whole vision is based is that truth reveals itself. As soon as that possibility is denied, it is my submission that there cannot be any traditional vision of man, and we will have stepped into modern anthropology.

Traditional thought makes no clear-cut separation between multiplicity and unity. A symbolic unity of the world or the cosmos reverberates in the 'I' as its diverse experiences, for in traditional thought unity is not a method of reducing the other to the same : it is a principle of oneness that can be experienced simultaneously as a cosmic unity and as a plurality. In traditional thought man experiences himself as diverse and feels himself divided up between sleeping and waking, good and evil, angels and demons.

Symbolic thought places itself squarely behind a hermeneutic view that wishes to decipher the secrets and to get through to them. Symbolic thought is gnostic, while scientific thought is agnostic. Scientific thought believes that two and two make four, and that is all. Symbolic thought searches for the meaning behind the number or the phenomena. For example, for the Hindu, 4 is the number of the universe, apart from being 1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1. The Pythagorean also must invoke the numerical truth in which the root and source of the eternal flux of creation is contained. In the same way, for the Hindu grammarian and some others, the alphabet is not merely the building block of spoken or written language. The second letter of the Devanagari script, kha, for example, is also a symbol for ether, sky and the cosmic void.

I have assumed the validity of the title of my talk which is there because a title has to be given. But in fact, from the traditional point of view, such a title would be untenable. It is only from the modern, contemporary point of view, of which all of us are a part, that such a title is possible. The very notion of anthropology is a modern notion, and in order to ascertain the nature of traditional thought about man, we have to distinguish between

the fundamental question of anthropology, namely "What is man?" from that of traditional thinkers, namely, "What or who am I?" I will call the second formulation the autological question, so that we have in traditional thinking autology in place of anthropology. The possibility of anthropology emerges only with the dawn of our own age. In fact the shift from autology to anthropology is also the shift from tradition to modernity.¹

If we phrase the question anthropologically—"What is man?"—this immediately has a number of consequences, each one of far-reaching significance. With your permission I will read out from my text what I characterise there as some of the most important consequences of the anthropological mode of questioning, as if this were a valid alternative mode of inquiry to the autological mode. I apologise for using this idiom. My submission is that primarily there is only the autological question, and the anthropological mode is a deviation. But since I cannot repeat this every time, I will speak as if there are two parallel ways of framing a question.

The first consequence of the anthropological mode is that man is objectified, so that this question is logically and substantively on a par with any other question about any other thing. By its syntax it is not different from a question like "What is a table?" or "What is a demand curve?", from a question of concept or one of empirical reality. And herein lies the paradox, for although man is considered as something unique, something distinguished from the rest of the cosmos, the anthropological mode of questioning does not hint at this either logically or syntactically.

The second consequence is that if we have this question as the basis for our knowledge and investigations about man, then we posit, ab initio, a gap between the epistemic and the ontic levels — between knowledge and being. And although in the various systems of thought there could be efforts to build bridges between the two levels, I submit that the chasm is impossible to span, irrespective of how sophisticated the devices are and how substantial they may seem.

1. Can Ramana Maharshi and Levi-Strauss reincarnate in one another in some future hope of an autological anthropology or an anthropological autology?—Ed.

The third consequence is that all knowledge of man, by whatever method accrued, would be basically through investigation, theorising, speculation or even intuition about man's powers, functions, achievements, culture and civilisation and the question of man's essence would be excluded by the very form of the question. The modern view that man has no universal destiny or nature, that man can only have a history that the right mode of understanding man is through his powers, his accomplishments, his history, his technology, and so on, is built into the very logic of the anthropological question.

The fourth follows from the previous consequences, and it is that pre-modern man is made ultimately problematic. Modern thought here faces a dilemma. If it denies a history, civilisation and culture before modern times, it is non-historical, and it prides itself on being historical, even pre-historical. On the other hand, once the history of man before the emergence of the modern age is taken into account, the consciousness of pre-modern man can be explained in one of the following ways. Either it can be explained in evolutionary terms, with continuous development from beginnings leading to modern times, or it can be explained as the difference basically, between error-ignorance and knowledge-truth. I don't suppose there is a third possibility of explaining pre-modern man as a survival — I have not come across this theory being put forward in a systematic form —, but I mention this because some kind of survival is implicit in and reverberates through some of the theories of continuity between pre-modern and modern man. At first a discontinuity was posited, but the difficulties that arise from this are obvious, and it is surprising how the position continued for as long as it did. But now the trend is for positing a continuity and the most fascinating of these theories is the structuralist theory, the Levi-Straussian theory. I cannot go into a critique of these theories of continuity and discontinuity, but all I wish to suggest is that pre-modern man becomes problematic almost beyond resolution and redemption.

It follows that the pre-modern conviction of a given unity between man and the divine, or between earth and heaven, is disrupted by the very form of the question "What is man?", since man in this mode of questioning becomes just an object among the

plethora of objects in the world. This alienation is bound to become unbearable, and because it is a necessary consequence of the anthropological mode of questioning, I would say that within the limits of that mode the only way in which this primordial alienation or disruption of unity can be sought to be overcome is by means of what I call a demiurgic concept of man in which man has to become, to the extent possible, master of the world in which he is placed. This is not a real solution because it does not really end the alienation, but it can be used as a last resort. The conquest of nature by man is internally related to the disruption of unity, which is from the very beginning assumed in the traditional vision of man, and which is, from the very beginning, broken in the anthropological concept. This kind of alienation leads, by its own logic, to the demiurgic concept of man, where man has to be master of nature and history. As a result, modern man's most prestigious system of knowledge comes to be controlled by technology. There is a reversal of the normal relationship: whereas knowledge should control its applications, the possibilities of application now control knowledge, and this reversal, I submit, is built into the very form of the anthropological question.

The last consequence, which I wish to discuss in a little detail, is this: when I ask "What is man?" although the form of the question excludes the questioner, which could be an animal or an angel, nevertheless, the existential fact remains that it is man himself who is asking it. In contradistinction, the autological question "Who am I?" includes the questioner, both semantically and syntactically. That is why it might even be called a pseudo-question from a certain point of view.

Knowledge of man, in the modern scientific mode, is necessarily through his works, and since man himself is asking the question, it has to be admitted that the object and subject of inquiry here is one and the same. Man is both the subject and object of the inquiry of human science; he is only the subject, not the object, of the inquiry of natural science. From the traditional point of view, however, the natural scientist is not distinguished from nature, so whether man is investigating nature or himself, it is the same phenomenon he investigates, the same matter. But in the modern view, the object is different from the investigator in the study of nature, but not in the study of human history, this I think is very

clearly recognised in modern thought. Vico says that nature is not made by man and so we cannot ultimately have valid knowledge of it, but history is made by man, and we can have valid, systematic knowledge of history. This is a postulate of traditional thought also, that we can understand only what we ourselves make. But in traditional thought,—the world and man are not made by man, so an ultimate understanding of either by man is not possible. The logic of modern thought, however, leads modern man to this vision of himself : since I cannot understand what is not made by me, let me make things which I want to understand; let me remake nature and man and know the ultimate secrets of life.

This modern vision has tremendous consequences. First, man's relation to finitude is inverted. Normally man experiences his finitude as a limitation or temporary negation of his infinity. If this is so, then the anthropological question, via its consequence of making the subject and object of study the same, inverts this relationship. Now finitude is something positive, and it has to be invested with all possible power. Thus man becomes an unfinished task which he has to finish, and his life is articulated and postulated upon a promise for which the guarantor is man himself. This is a very important consequence, in my opinion of the fact that man is both the knower and the known in the anthropological context.

Another way of expressing the same point about the coincidence of knower and known would be that the empirical is at the same time the transcendental. In other words, an empirical theory of transcendence is presupposed in this mode, and the whole enterprise hinges on the validity of such a theory.

I began by laying down the main ideas of what I had to call the traditional vision of man, and then I tried to compare it with the anthropological mode. I do not have time to go into greater details, but it is implicit in my argument that this "social-science" vision of man is completely untenable and perverse from the human point of view.

Continuing in the same vein, I would like to put before you what I call the theory of residues. Modern thought about man leaves and recognises, four kinds of residues or experiences, some of them even being products of it. I do not mean that they are

not found in other modes of thought, but that the body of modern thought is incapable of absorbing them. These I call the residues of temporality, one; experience and imagination, two, identity and rationality, three and four. I will introduce these as briefly as I can.

First, the residue of temporality. At the individual level we have no memory of our birth, no experience of death. Modern thought hardly has any theory or way of coping with death — it basically avoids it. But this is at the individual level, and we might say that science is not concerned with the individual. If we take pre-history or archaeology or geology or anthropology in the sense of ethnography, we find that they posit a time when nature and earth existed, but man had not come upon the scene. But when we describe or conceptualise it, we do it as if men were there, because the modes of perception through which this is done are human modes. This is an obvious contradiction, because if man has not come upon the scene, a description of it is not possible at all. It is not like saying that today's man is not the Roman man, and yet we can understand Roman man because we do posit some kind of continuity between ourselves and Roman man. We might even posit a continuity between pre-historic and modern man, but between a time uninhabitable by man and times inhabited by him, no continuity can be posited. Yet impermissible description of such a residue of time are basic to some theories, to some of the modern constructions of prehistory in the social-science sense of the term.

Similarly, there is no relationship in man's life, collective and social, between the past and future. The past is related through memory, and the future through experience. But memory and experience are subjective concepts, and unless we have a non-subjective theory of memory and hope the conceptual discontinuity between past and future, and the existential continuity between them, will ever be separated by a bridgeless gap. This is another instance of a residue of temporality, recognised and created but unabsorbed by thought.

Then come residues of experience and imagination. What I mean is this : how can man be that life whose web, whose pulsations and varied energy constantly exceed the experience that is immediately given of these to man; how can he be that labour

whose laws and demands are imposed upon him like an alien system; how can he be the subject of a language which for thousands of years has been formed without him — a language whose organisation escapes him, whose meanings sleep an almost unbreakable sleep in the words he momentarily activates by means of discourse, and within which he is obliged, at the very outset, to lodge his speech and thought as if they were doing no more than animate for a brief period one segment of that web of innumerable possibilities. In other words, the concepts we use for understanding ourselves in contemporary social-scientific thought have a basis in a kind of imagination which man in terms of modern, anthropological knowledge lacks, and this becomes a residue.

Next comes residue of identity. Whenever I speak of the self, of me, whatever description I give, I am implying that this 'I' is 'n plus 1'. This is entailed by the fact that I am the knower and the known—the knower has to be (n plus 1) and cannot be equal to (n) which he has known. If this is a permanent residue, we need some way of coping with it. My argument is not that valid, human theories do not know residues—traditional thought does and in fact the concept of a residue is central there—but that there is no way of resolving residues in modern thought.

The last residue, that of rationality, is the culmination of the earlier ones. I divide it into three: unreason or irrationality, the unconscious and sex. According to modern thought itself, the unconscious is not simply a temporarily hidden part of the conscious which in future days will become conscious, but as some thing autonomous which will always be there. In certain ways the unconscious is the discovery of modern thought itself. I am reminded of a sentence of Walter Benjamin, wherein he says that the camera invented unconscious optics just as psychoanalysis invented the unconscious. When Marx says there will be a time when man will have full understanding and there will not be any thing unexplained, he is not recognising the unconscious at all, for those who recognize it do not speak of it as being abolished at some later point of time.²

2. Characterised as it is by life-and-death struggles between optimism and despair, clarity and cynicism, immanence and oblivion, isn't modern thought tragically Manichaeic in its essential spirit?—Ed.

Irrationality looks like a lower form of rationality—a kind of sub-rationality—but if you survey the irrational structures as postulated or discovered by modern social sciences, you will not think of them as some derogating of rationality which can be completely overcome at some later stage in the development of human reason. In the first place, human reason in modern thought is seen to have reached almost its ultimate point—although that is not to say that no further development is possible. All modern sciences basically understand "irrational" structures—say religion—in terms either of a combination of unconscious motives and irrationality or simply as irrational structures, of which there are many. Marx of course, may be an exception when he says that religion will disappear one day because there will be perfect understanding. But otherwise irrationality also is not simply a derogation of reason but as independent and autonomous as reason, just as the unconscious is inborn with man and used as a principle of explanation and theory construction in modern social scientific thought itself.

Sex is, again, basically a residue in the sense that it is not treated as an adjunct to anything in human life. It is treated as a kind of primal energy, so that its mechanisms, form, transformation and perversions have to be understood either in terms of a combination of the unconscious and sex or in terms of itself.

So these three are residues of rationality, and I call them that because reason is regarded as the basic tool and a sufficient one for understanding and coping with them. Yet they are permanent residues,³ not subsumable by reason, and regarded as sovereign and autonomous. My argument is not an external criticism—if it was that, there would be no force left in it—but an internal one. If the validity of this structure of argument is recognised, we are led back to where we began to the main ideas of the traditional vision of man. Thank you.

DISCUSSION

ASHOK KELKAR :

I think I shall reserve my more serious questions for a later occasion. The reason for putting the less serious questions is

3. Seshendra, Lord of residues, is not some wizard and overlord of the Id, but God.—Ed.

that I want to get them out of the way so that they don't clog the more important issues later.

I am afraid there is a basic, internal contradiction in your paper. Take the clinical analysis of the consequences of rejecting the traditional vision of man. I think this whole clinical stance you have adopted is an anthropological stance which you fundamentally reject.

The second point is that when you say the existence of pre-modern man becomes problematic for modern social science, in the same way the existence of modern man becomes problematic for the idea you are putting forward, because it implies a mysterious fall from grace which is discontinuous and fundamentally inexplicable.

A. K. SARAN :

In response to the first point Professor Kelkar has raised I would like to say that I was not giving a demonstration of traditional thinking. The thinking, if any, that went into the presentation is naturally modern thinking. I am a child of my age and I cannot demonstrate how a traditional thinker would be thinking before this audience. It was no part of my plan to do so. My ambition was to indicate somehow, to take my audience back to a kind of thought which I feel is adequate to human dignity and away from one which is not, and in which I myself once participated. It is my cross that I am a child of my time, although I might try and understand traditional thinking just as an anthropologist tries to understand primitive man. I don't suppose even the greatest anthropologist today would be able to give a demonstration of primitive man whose thought he has analysed or understood. In fact, it would be a foolish attempt, for what is dead is dead—a saying which is not mine but one borrowed from Tantra. And in spite of several techniques to revive the dead, the fundamental insight that the tantrics themselves emphasise is 'once dead always dead.'⁴

Professor Kelkar's second point about modern man becoming problematic has been dealt with in my written paper although I have not read it out. There are two answers to it. The first is

* Resurrection is not a reviving of the dead, but the reemergence through death of the eternal.—Ed.

that since historically traditional man comes before modern man, the latter could not have become a problem whereas the former could. But this is not the answer I intend to give, because 'traditional' is not a historical category for me as it is for social-scientific thought. In fact, that is where the tension arises, because it is not wholly a historical category, and yet their system compels social scientists to make it so. My answer is different, and it is that traditional thought has provided for this. You mentioned a fall from grace, and this is one of the central concepts of traditional thought in many traditions. A fall from grace is not a modern thought, and a modern social scientist cannot use it. In fact he cannot even use the concept of perversion or degeneration in that sense because he has to be value-neutral. Secondly, traditional man does not claim to understand everything. He begins by saying that we can understand fully only that which we ourselves have made. And since man has not made himself or nature, the final understanding, in accordance with traditional thought, if it is granted to man at all, is done through the incommunicable mode. In the communicable mode it is not granted to man, so that if traditional man was to reincarnate himself and asked to explain to modern man, he would say that it is not given to man to understand everything—that it was not even his ambition to do so. One may try, but one may equally possibly fail. As opposed to that view, the fundamental ambition here is to be able to understand all, which leads, in fact, to the ambition of recreating the universe.⁵ So I would say that modern man has been provided for and does not pose a problem to traditional man. In fact there is some kind of description in Hindu mythology of the kind of man we will have in modern times. It may not very comparable to what we find today, but nevertheless, they have provision for the reality of modern man. That kind of futurology is still to be evolved for modern man, and I don't think it can be evolved by modern thought.

DHARMENDRA GOEL :

I would like it, Professor Saran, if you could explain a little more the problem in man being his own knower. Perhaps you

5. "Vishwamitra"—the name in sacred myth of the would be human creator of an alternative universe—permissibly means "Foe of the universe"—Ed.

are referring to adhyasa which comes up repeatedly in Vedanta, where the (n plus 1) theory is needed.

The second point concerns your assertion that the modern concept of man necessarily postulate an empirical theory of transcendence. What is this theory of transcendence ?

DAYA KRISHNA :

Professor Saran has just said that his notion of tradition is not exactly historical. If we take this seriously, it would mean that the contrast between modernity and tradition is a typical contrast, and is not related exactly to the temporal location of its exemplifications. I would say that Professor Saran has chosen, arbitrarily or not, a certain constellation of concepts and dubbed them as tradition. I hope he implies that these are also, simultaneously, predominantly found in most of the historical traditions. Unless this is so, the exercise, however imaginatively conceived, will fail to illumine the situation. After all, if modernity can be found in the past and tradition can be found in the present, the dichotomy may serve certain purposes of analysis but it basically does not fulfil the promise of the title of the talk.

My second question is whether Professor Saran's traditional concept of man is itself a construct primarily out of certain traditions he has selected. If we don't keep historicity aside, I think one can give example after example to show that certain so-called traditions, in the historical sense of the term, will display notions that he ascribes to modernity. After all, the idea of the conquest of nature is not quite a modern one—the getting of power has always been an integral part of spiritual seeking also, and it would be difficult to sustain an argument for its modernity. Again, the great ages of tradition were also the great ages of slavery. How were other human individuals treated ? It is not merely a question of "Who am I ?" but also "Who are we ?"—the relation of 'I' to other 'I's'. I think these are some points that Professor Saran should consider.

A. K. SARAN :

Referring to Professor Goel's question, I need not go into the Vedantic notion of adhyasa in order to elucidate the idea of the

residue of identity which I explain in terms of the 'I' being always "n plus 1". I could take as example the distinction that Professor G. H. Mead draws between "I" and "me", where the latter is all my situational manifestations and exemplifications, and "I" something beyond. An explanation of this notion in terms of Vedantic adhyasa will be a fallacy because it would be bringing in another thought system when I have already mentioned that the notion is present in modern thought itself. In this context I would say that modern social psychology, sociology, anthropology, can deal with the "me" but can only postulate the "I" without really dealing with it. I am not saying that traditional thought has a theory of "I". It is a residue there, but it is also recognised as such. Here the residue is not acknowledged.⁶

The second question of empirical transcendence is allied to the notion of residues, but it is not synonymous with it. The idea is that there are relative transcendences—one empirical field transcends the other, and so on, and we need not, therefore, posit an ultimate transcendence or regard this system as an infinite one. I was pointing to the kind of paradox that is implicit in such a view, the paradox of the theory of types, and which is implicit in the logic of the social sciences taken as a corpus of knowledge.

Coming to Professor Daya Krishna's objections, he is quite right in saying that tradition and modernity are typical contrasts, and that tradition is not wholly a historical concept. His point is that if these are typical contrasts, how do I argue for the superiority of one over the other, since they will be found at all times and in all places. My point is that modernity as anti-tradition is recognised in most of the traditions, or let us say, religious traditions. The fact that they are ever there does not, however, imply a coordinate relationship. That does not follow, just as true and false can be recognized as typical contrasts in most existential or language system notwithstanding an undeniable superiority of true over false in some given axiological sense. The same can be said of validity and invalidity, correctness and incorrectness, rationality and irrationality. Irrationality in traditional thought is real but a derogation of rationality, in modern thought it forms a permanent indissoluble residue.

6. Often modern thought substitutes the unmentionable for the inexpressible. Moral permissiveness goes with metaphysical repression.—Ed.