

SURPLUS VALUE, PROFIT AND EXPLOITATION—AN ATTEMPT AT AN ANALYSIS OF SOME CONCEPTS IN MARXIAN ECONOMICS

The theoretic structure of Marxian economy was elaborated to understand the laws of the motion of capitalism. The motion of capitalism, however, is nothing but the process of economic development under conditions of multiple centres of investment decisions. It becomes, then, an interesting question to ask as to how much of the theoretic structure of Marx applies to the problems of economic development in general and how much is limited to those aspects only which follow from the theoretically contingent condition of decentralized investment decisions. It is not, therefore, the primary purpose of this paper to enquire into the adequacy of the conceptual structure of Marxian economic thought or even its relative advantages or disadvantages over the more widely accepted school following the discoveries of Walras, Menger, Jevons, and others. It will rather assume the general framework of Marxian theory and attempt to seek an answer within its limits.

Having accepted the labour theory of value from the classical economists, Marx attempted to understand the phenomenon of capitalist production and explain the emergence of profit therein. The explanation, as is well known, was found in the fact that the labour power which the capitalist engaged produced more value than what it was paid for as the value of its labour. The surplus value that it produces would have accrued to itself if the means of production had not been alienated by the conditions of capitalist production. The appropriation of the surplus value by the capitalist, depending as it does on the economically contingent fact of the alienation of the means of production from those who possess only their labour power, is exploitation in the Marxian

sense of the word. The appropriation of the surplus value provides also the foundation for the emergence of profit, even though it would be wrong to identify the two, as the rate of surplus value is its ratio to the variable capital only while the rate of profit is the ratio of surplus value to the total capital outlay which one incurs. It should, however, not be forgotten that 'the absolute amount of profit is equal to the absolute amount of surplus value'.¹

The emergence of surplus value is thus the precondition for the possibility of exploitation and profit and not vice versa. The surplus value emerges, however, because the labour power chooses itself or is forced to choose to work for a far longer time to produce goods of greater value than are necessary for its maintenance and production at the prevalent standard of living in any particular society. It should be noted that the emergence of such a surplus is in no way dependent on the alienation of the means of production from labour power except in the sense that under conditions of alienation the owners of labour power are bound to be forced to produce such a surplus. But the condition, while *sufficient* is not *necessary*, for the same phenomenon can be produced even when it is absent. It should, therefore, be clear that the confinement of surplus value to conditions of capitalist production is analytically unjustifiable. It is rather the immediate and direct result of the increase in productivity beyond the bio-social minimum which is, according to Marx, a precondition of capitalist production. This condition, however, merely permits or rather makes it possible that surplus value may emerge, but does, in no way, necessitate it. The crucial point is the *forcing of oneself or being forced by others* to work for a longer time to produce more value than would be sufficient to live at the older level. In short, with an increase in productivity, one may produce goods equivalent to the former value in less time or work the same amount of time and produce greater value. If the former choice is made the economy will be static; if the latter, it would be developmental. The emergence of surplus value, thus, is a sign of a developing economy and is, in fact, merely another name for it.

¹ *Theories of Surplus Value*, Selections, Marx, p. 329, Lawrence & Wishart, 1951.

The creation of surplus value by working more time than is necessary to reproduce the value of labour power opens, however, not merely the possibility of an increase in the customary consumption and, thus, in course of time the customary value of labour power, but also the possibility of an increase in the rate of economic development of a society. A large amount of surplus value, or even the whole of it, may be used as capital for investment rather than as revenue for consumption. On the other hand, even if no substantial amount of surplus value exists in the economic system, it can be created by depressing the value of the labour power to the biological minimum. The largest amount of surplus value, however, would be available for capital investment if both the value of the labour power is depressed to the minimum and the working day extended to the maximum. This is the condition for the most rapid rate of economic development which a society can achieve, provided it uses it for investment rather than consumption.

The appropriation of surplus value for the purpose of investment rather than consumption is, then, the key to the economic development of a society. The technical fact of appropriation or deduction is *economically* unrelated to the fact as to *who* appropriates or deducts or in what *form* the appropriation or deduction takes place. The crucial difference lies only in the fact whether the surplus value appropriated is used for *investment* or *consumption*. Such a decision can be made only by those who own the means of production themselves or, to put it in more operational terms, who exercise direct effective control over them. It is, of course, true that such a decision would be immensely facilitated if the surplus value is appropriated from the labour of others, for then the sacrifice would be suffered by others rather than oneself. It is, however, in no way necessitated by this fact, just as when the surplus value is appropriated by oneself out of one's own surplus labour, it does not necessarily follow that it will be used for consumption rather than investment.²

Thus while the decision between consumption and investment out of the deducted surplus value is the crucial one for the rate

2. The cultural factors influencing such a decision are not mentioned here as they are outside the conceptual framework of Marxian economics.

of development of an economy, it remains true that whoever makes the decision would be in a *privileged consumption position* whatever may be the direction of his decision.³ This position of being the *privileged* consumer follows directly from the strategic role that the persons who make the decision occupy in an economy. It should be noted that the role is *indispensable* for the functioning of a developing economy, though the fact of privileged consumption follows merely from the fact of deduction or appropriation of surplus value. But when the deduction is made through the value of one's own surplus labour and the decision is made by one's own self, there seems to be a *justification*⁴ for the privileged consumption position of the person who makes the decision. When, however, appropriation is done by persons who play no part in the production process, except that of making investment decisions, it is difficult to see if their privileged consumption position is justified. Whatever may be the justification, it remains a fact that there would be the greatest probability of such persons apportioning to themselves a privileged consumption position in the distributive apparatus of an economy. Such a probability follows not from any economic or sociological necessity, but rather from the psychological fact that most persons would like to maximize their satisfactions, if they can do so.

The problem of 'justification', in fact, depends on the answer to the question whether the person or persons who make the investment decisions create 'value' in the Marxian sense of the word. It is difficult to see as to what measurable labour is involved in the investment decisions. Dobb has written, 'As used by Ricardo and Marx the conception of labour was an objective one; labour being conceived as the expenditure of a given quantum of human energy.'⁵ It is well known, however, that *merely* the expenditure of objectively measurable quantum of human energy is insufficient to create economic value. This expenditure is the common denominator of all activity and can, thus, in no way, be the basis for the distinction between different kinds of activities. When Marx denies to the capitalist the function of creating value,

3. Leaving aside the limiting case when the whole of surplus is reinvested and no portion of it is consumed.

4. This "justification", of course, has nothing to do with economics.

5. *Political Economy and Capitalism*, p. 13.

he surely does not mean to deny the 'expenditure of a given quantum of human energy' on his part. The denial of the value-creating role to the capitalist follows, perhaps, from his essential *dispensability* to the process of production. This dispensability is technical and economic rather than social in its nature. For, Marx generally grants that the capitalist is indispensable in his social role, at least, at a particular level of socio-historic development of a society. His social indispensability at a particular stage of economic development does not, however, grant him the value-creating privilege in the theoretic structure of Marxian economics.

The capitalist, however, is merely a name for the bearer of certain functions which cluster around the concepts of commercial, industrial, and finance capitals. These functions belong to the areas of marketing, entrepreneurial, managerial and investment decisions. It is difficult to see how these functions are dispensable to the functions of a complex economy. Deeper than these is the function of the capitalist to appropriate surplus value and to accumulate capital. Both these functions are indispensable for a developing economy, and if indispensability to the productive process is the criterion for value creation, it is difficult to see how it can be denied to the capitalist who exercises all these functions. The combination of these different functions in the same individual or their dispersal among different persons can be no ground for forgetting their indispensability to the economic process.

Whatever the criterion for value creation that we employ, it would apply equally to all persons who perform the same functions in the working of an economy. The linguistic designation, for example, of the person or persons who make investment decisions in different economies would be irrelevant to the question whether they create value or not. It is necessary to insist on this point as many Marxist economists seem to imply that the persons performing such functions in a socialist economy would be creating value while their counterparts in the capitalistic system would not be doing so. If value is being created by the labour of persons who are performing such functions, it is being equally created by persons in both the societies; if not, it is being created in neither of the two.

This point is important, as the related concepts of 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour depend upon it. Marx wrote: '*Produ-*

ctive labour is, therefore—in the system of capitalist production—that which produces *surplus value* for its employer, or which transforms the objective conditions of labour into capital and their owner into a capitalist; and, therefore, labour which produces its own product as capital.⁶ This characterization can equally well apply to any economic system which is not just reproducing itself. The production of surplus value and its alienation are two different things even if it is a fact, as in the case of capitalist production, that the two are intimately related to each other. The confinement to conditions of capitalist production leads further to the failure to see that such an intimate relation may obtain in conditions which, at least, seem apparently different from the capitalistic. All labour must produce a part of its own product as capital even for conditions of static reproduction. It is only when surplus value is transformed into capital that we have productive labour in the system of capitalist production. But transformation of surplus value into capital has no necessary relation to capitalistic forms of production. If it were so, a socialistic society could not even start on any programme of economic development, for it is merely another name for the transformation of surplus value into capital. The persons who perform the function of transformation of surplus value into capital do not, according to Marx, perform any 'productive labour' in the economic system. He confined his statement to those who perform such a role under conditions of capitalist production. But such a limitation is analytically unjustifiable as the role is not *necessarily* limited to capitalistic conditions only.

The labour of persons who perform such roles is not merely 'unproductive' in the sense that they do not create any surplus value which is transformed into capital but also 'unproductive' in the wider sense that it does not create any value at all. These people, then, even though they perform indispensable functions in the process of production, belong to the class of 'pure consumers' as they do not create any value. The class of 'pure consumers', it can easily be seen, depends on our criterion of value creation. The Marxian *interpretation* of the 'labour-criterion' would, perhaps, include the managerial function as falling under the criterion and

6. *Theories of Surplus Value*, p. 181. Italics author's.

exclude the commercial, entrepreneurial, and investment functions from its possible range. The administrative, police and military 'labour' of running a society would hardly be even considered as a claimant for the field. It may be true that the economic system of production may not even function without the relatively successful functioning of the political system, but this would in no way result in what may be called 'political labour' creating 'economic value'.

Such a consequence, it should be noted, is confined in no way to the political structure of a capitalistic society only. Whatever be the social system, the workers 'labouring' in the 'political' area of a society cannot be considered as creating value in the Marxian sense of the word.⁷ It should be remembered, in this connection, that Marx, while computing the value of labour power, included what may be called the 'biological costs' only. That there were 'social costs' to be incurred if any person were to live, he conveniently forgot to take into account. It would certainly have been inconvenient to consider a part of the administrative, civil and military costs as belonging to the value of labour power. The reasons for such a refusal are well known. But what is, perhaps, not equally well known is the fact that the reasons cannot be confined merely to the capitalistic system of society. If they are true, they would apply to every society; if not, they would apply to none. The existence of military costs, for example, follows from the fact that there are other groups besides one's own in the world. A capitalist, communist, or fascist state would not need a large army if its sway stretches round the whole world. And if it does not so stretch, it is bound to keep an army, whether it likes it or not. The police would remain in any complex society even if it stretches round the globe. The administrative functions also would increase rather than decrease. If these roles, then, are merely value consuming and not value creating, they would be so in every society.

The presence of such a large class of pure value consumers would ensure the fact of 'exploitation' in every society. These persons can consume *only* by appropriating the surplus value created by

7. If by some reinterpretation 'political labour' is considered to create 'economic value', it would do so in every society, including the capitalistic also.

the labour power of others for themselves. The forms of appropriation may be different in different societies, but the fact of appropriation lying behind the veils of these different forms can be directly inferred from the existence of a class which, by definition, cannot create any value. The fact of appropriation, it should be noted, is distinct from the question whether a part of what is appropriated is used as capital and invested for further production. It may be so used; equally, it may not be. The fact is merely a function of our criterion and the existence of persons who do not satisfy such a criterion. If, by any chance, the non-existence of persons who do not satisfy the criterion is extremely improbable in any functioning social system, then the existence of 'parasitic exploiters' would almost be inevitable in any society.

The use of what is appropriated as capital and its reinvestment for productive purposes, however, shows that 'exploitation' may *also* result in economic development. Though we cannot infer from the fact of 'exploitation' the fact of economic development, the converse does not hold true. If there is economic development we can always infer 'exploitation', for it is merely the appropriated surplus value used as capital for investment rather than as revenue for consumption. This relationship of economic development to 'exploitation' in the Marxian sense cannot be confined, by the very nature of the case, to conditions under capitalism only. The relationship is intrinsic and is related only contingently to the social forms under which the economic development occurs. The differences of social conditions within which the development occurs would be reflected more in the form rather than the content of 'exploitation'. It should be remembered that the so-called 'expropriation of the expropriators' is not 'exploitation', but merely a transfer of the locus of 'exploitation' from one set of exploiters to another. The old 'exploiters' did not create any value and, thus, could not be 'exploited' in the technical sense of the word. But the new set of persons who 'expropriate the expropriators' also do not create any value and, thus, can merely transfer to themselves what the previous set used to expropriate.

The fact that the new set of expropriators use the appropriated surplus value for economic development cannot make any difference to the essential situation, for it is generally agreed that the previous set of exploiters also used to do the same. The mere

function of using the appropriated surplus value for economic development, as we have already pointed out, does not create any value in the theoretical framework of Marxian economics. The exercise of the function by a new set of persons, therefore, does not change the situation in any essential aspect with respect to the fact of 'exploitation'.

The problem of economic development under socialism and, thus, the related problem of 'exploitation' in that society, did not engage the attention of Marx. The sufficient reason for such neglect lay in his belief that the socialist revolution would take place in a society where the productive forces would have developed to their uttermost under conditions of capitalism and only when they would have become fetters for further development of production. On one side, there was the feeling that the capitalist system of production would have developed the productive capacity to such an extent that what was required for the all-round economic well-being of the people was a mere change in the ownership and distributive system of the society. This is what is technically known as the problem of 'underconsumption' in Marxian economics. On the other hand, there was also the feeling that in its developed stages, the capitalistic system would not be able to increase or even utilize the existing productive capacity of the system. This is what is known as 'the falling-rate-of-profit' aspect of the Marxian theory. While both the aspects follow logically from the Marxian theory, it may be said with fair accuracy that Marx did not conceive a very wide gap between the productive capacity of the developed capitalist system and the desirable consumption standards of the whole of the people. If it were not so, the problem of developing the productive capacities of an economy under socialist conditions to ensure a fair consumption standard for all of the people would certainly have engaged his attention. In fact, Marx was in the happy position of assuming that the dirty job of exploiting the peasantry and the proletariat would already have been done by the capitalists who, in pursuing their rate of profit, would already have created an industrial apparatus and technology that would have taken the production to unknown heights when the socialists would take control and get all the glory by distributing equitably all the goods thus produced. This is what is known as the historical function

of capital and to which that glowing tribute in *The Communist Manifesto* has been given.⁸

The situation, however, completely changes if it is granted that the socialist revolution may occur in an economy where the productive capacity has not been developed to the 'saturation point' by the capitalist entrepreneurs. As is well known, such a possibility has not merely been granted in the Marxist literature after the experience of the Russian Revolution, but has already assumed the form of a law that it is the weakest link in the chain that breaks first rather than the strongest.⁹ This is merely a round-about way of saying that the productive capacities of such a society are completely undeveloped in relation to the productive performance of the most developed societies and that the task of the so-called socialist revolution would be, at least at first, to develop the productive capacity of such a society.

It has generally been granted that the historical function of capital was just such a development of the productive system of the societies which are now considered as 'the strongest links' in the chain of capitalism. It would, therefore, be interesting to know whether the socialistic performance of the same function involves the *same* basic mechanisms differentiated only by the fact that it has merely to *repeat* what capitalism had to *create*.

The pattern of the capitalist development is fairly well known. So also is the performance of socialism in the Soviet Union. But what has perhaps not been noticed or, at least, not emphasized, is the basic similarities between the two. The proletarianization of the peasantry by land enclosures, the creation of wage labour by making it impossible for handicrafts to survive, the indirect exploitation of even the existing peasantry by cheaper bread and dearer manufactured goods, the increasing capitalization of agriculture, the intensive use of labour and even forced labour in certain areas of the economy—in short, all the diverse ways and means to appropriate surplus value from those who create it. The

8. Professor Schumpeter noted it in his well-known article on Karl Marx, *Ten Great Economists*, p. 8. Professor Sweezy has also mentioned it in his *Socialism*, pp. 111-12.

9. We are not interested here in discussing as to how far the introduction of such a law is consistent with the theoretic structure of Marxian Sociology and Philosophy of History.

human suffering involved is described with biting vigour in the first volume of *Capital*. But the author of those passages did not or could not imagine that one day those very means would be used and suffering imposed under his august name.

The differences that are generally emphasized are the state direction of the process of development and the immense shortening of time in which the development has taken place. The heavy investment in capital goods, rather than consumer goods, industries is defended by considerations of defence and the requirements of a faster rate of economic development. The suffering is explained primarily in terms of the pre-socialist mentality of the peasant. It can easily be seen that some of these characteristics are common to socialist and non-socialistic economies and that others follow more from the fact that the economic development is belated and, therefore, copied and not created.

It is well known, for example, that the industrial development in France or Germany or pre-socialist Russia was not done under the conditions that prevailed in the case of England. It was the banks of the *credit mobilier* type which functioned as the instruments of industrialization in France. It should be remembered that 'the difference between banks of the *credit mobilier* type and commercial banks in the advanced industrial country of the time (i.e. England) was absolute'.¹⁰ Similarly, in Germany, it was the type known as the universal bank which was the instrument of industrialisation. In Czarist Russia, where the backwardness was so great 'that no banking system could conceivably succeed in attracting sufficient funds to finance a large-scale industrialisation', it required 'the compulsory machinery of the government, which, through its taxation policies, succeeded in directing incomes from consumption to investment'. The same difference in the auspices under which the imitative industrialization took place can be noted within the two halves of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As Gerschenkron has pointed out, it was in the relatively more advanced part of Austria proper that 'the banks could successfully devote themselves to the promotion of industrial activities', while, 'across the

10. 'Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective', Alexander Gerschenkron in *The Progress of Underdeveloped Areas*, ed. Bert. F. Hoselitz, p. 12.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

Leitha River, in Hungary, the activities of the banks proved altogether inadequate, and around the turn of the century the Hungarian Government embarked upon vigorous policies of industrialisation.¹² Canada is the other example where a large part of economic development had perforce to be made under state auspices. As W. T. Easterbrook has written, 'what followed could be described as a period of planned expansion, with a great deal of state control of a very direct sort over the rate and the course of growth from the 1870's to 1914.'¹³

The conditions under which the industrialization has taken place in the Soviet Union are thus, in no sense unique or peculiar to socialism as many writers seem to think. Even the direction which such an industrialization has taken is hardly new. 'The Russian Government of the nineties', for example, 'did not evince any interest in 'light industry''.¹⁴ In Germany, the banks were primarily attracted to coal mining, iron and steel making, electrical and general engineering and heavy chemical industries. The shortening of time and the related high speed of development are more a result of borrowed technology than characteristics specific to socialist development. The case of Japanese industrialization in the East points also to the same conclusions. As for the explanation of human suffering in terms of peasants' mentality, it should be remembered that the majority of persons in the underdeveloped economies are peasants and that the so-called explanation would equally be valid for the suffering of the people in the early stages of capitalist development.

It would be difficult to say that the bourgeois economists of Marxist persuasion are not aware of these similarities. But they consistently refuse to apply the Marxist categories to the situation of economic development under socialism, as these categories, though supposed to be purely descriptive or analytic in their nature, have a strong emotional significance, mostly of a negative character, attached to them. For example, 'the dispossession of numerous small owners and the creation of a proletariat' are, for Dobb, 'the condition *sine qua non* for the capital-investing pro-

12. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

13. 'State Control and Free Enterprise in their Impact on Economic Growth'. *The Progress of Underdeveloped Areas*, p. 63.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

cess'.¹⁵ But this description would be confined mostly to places where he is describing capitalist development. When he would write of socialist development, however, he would use the more innocent phraseology of there being required, for example, 'a large increase in the labour-force engaged in industry and on construction, and consequently a rapid growth of the urban population'.¹⁶ Similarly, he would not write that the investments under the plans in the Soviet Union were largely financed by the direct and indirect expropriation of value from the peasantry, but only that they 'were largely financed by a fall in the *relative* share of agricultural production consumed by its producers; but this did not require a fall in the *absolute* share consumed (except for rather special reasons in the two bad harvests of 1931 and 1932)'.¹⁷ Such statements can be multiplied to one's heart's content. The problem of 'exploitation', for example, becomes the problem of 'sacrifice', even though the majority of the persons (e.g. the peasants) may be opposed to it and the persons enforcing the sacrifice through police, secret service, and the military may have nothing to lose and everything to gain from such 'sacrifice' on the part of others.

The problem of 'exploitation' under socialism is not much discussed by Marxist economists. But, as we have seen, the word has a purely technical significance in the theoretic framework of Marxian economics, though it is generally utilized only for the description of pre-socialist economies because of the strong emotional overtones attached to it. It, however, does not require much ingenuity to see that if there are any persons in a society who do not create value, there must be 'exploitation' in that society. Or, if there is a more or less rapid rate of capital construction, there is equally

15. *Some Aspects of Economic Development*, p. 16.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 75. Italics author's. It should be noted that Mr. Dobb has merely written that the fall in the relative share did not *require* a fall in the absolute share—which is *logically* unimpeachable. He does not say, however, that it did not fall. As for the "special reasons" and their intimate relation to the enforced proletarianization of the peasantry as well as the related problem of de-kulakisation, the reader is referred to the recent study of the whole question, *Communism and Peasantry*, Ramswarup, Prachi Prakashan, Calcutta.

more or less of 'exploitation' in that society. Dobb has written, for example, that, "A socialist economy would clearly be ruled by the aim of augmenting its capital construction at a more or less rapid rate until the 'saturation point' of capital-equipment was reached—that is, until no further gain in productivity would result from using labour to embody itself as 'stored-up labour', where only the use and maintenance or replacement of existing plant and equipment took place; and where the whole current net output of labour could accrue to labour as current consumption."¹⁸ It is clear, therefore, that 'exploitation' can cease only when 'the *whole* current net output of labour would accrue to labour as *current consumption*'. This is essentially the picture of a static economy and Dobb has admitted in the footnote that 'so long as technical discovery continued, this point would probably never actually be reached; but it would continually be a goal which would be approached'.¹⁹ Leaving aside the questionable desirability of a goal whose precondition involves the complete sterility of scientific knowledge and its virtual cessation as well as the question of the empirical meaningfulness of a goal that can be approached but never realized. Dobb has admitted, in so many words, the inevitability of 'exploitation' till such a condition is reached.

Not only this, he has failed to see that the concept of 'saturation-point' of capital-equipment is itself a function not merely of existing technical knowledge, but also of population and standard of living. If we assume a static standard of living or, say, a declining one, we can quickly reach the 'saturation-point'; if, on the other hand, we assume it to be a rising one, it would be difficult even to conceive of a saturation-point. The same considerations would apply to population. The essential point is that the concept of a 'saturation-point' cannot even be *defined* without a reference to population and standard of living. Thus, unless we assume these two to be static, the 'saturation-point' cannot be reached and 'exploitation' eliminated.

The achievement of Dobb's 'saturation-point' is menaced from another side, if Marx is to be considered as correct. He

18. *Political Economy and Capitalism*, p. 283.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 283. The similarity to Schumpeter's concept of "innovation" and its relation to economic development and profit should be noted.

writes; 'Where capitalist production is developed—that is, the productivity of labour; that is, the constant capital; that is, especially the portion of the constant capital which consists in fixed capital—the mere reproduction of the fixed capital in all spheres, and the parallel reproduction of the existing capital which reproduces fixed capital, forms an accumulation fund....'²⁰ If we understand it correctly, it seems to mean that reproduction of capital leads inevitably to its accumulation, i.e., increase. The restriction of the phenomenon to conditions of 'capitalist production' is purely accidental as can be readily seen from the quotation itself. What matters is the existence of that 'portion of the constant capital which consists in fixed capital' in large quantities and not the social conditions under which the production is taking place. If, then, it is true that mere reproduction of fixed capital leads to its accumulation, it would be impossible to conceive of a 'saturation-point' ever being reached. In fact, any situation where 'only the use and maintenance or replacement of existing plant and equipment took place' would become increasingly impossible as we would try to approach it, for the more 'fixed capital' we would have the more we would accumulate just by reproducing it.

However, even if such a 'saturation-point' is reached in a particular society, and even if it is granted that all adult persons, excluding children and invalids,²¹ create value, it would not necessarily mean the end of 'exploitation' in such a society. The differential distribution of income involving a differential standard of living for different classes of people would most probably imply 'exploitation' in the Marxian sense, as it is extremely unlikely under conditions of free mobility and free opportunity that whole classes of people, and not merely marginal individuals, would create unequal amounts of value. If, on the other hand, there is no free mobility or free opportunity, 'exploitation' is there for everyone to see.

But even if there is no differential distribution of income in such a society, does it necessarily follow that there occurs no

20. *Theories of Surplus Value*, p. 369.

21. The case of adult women who would not be doing any wage-work in such a society would be peculiar. Will they have to be classed with pure consumers or as productive labourers in the field of reproduction?

appropriation of surplus value in it? No, for according to Marxian theory, if such a country engages in trade, it would be either exploited or be the exploiter in such a relationship. The situation follows merely from the fact of trade, or rather trade with a country which is under-or-over-developed in relation to oneself. As Dobb has written: 'Super-profit in Marx's sense can arise, it would seem, as much from free and unregulated exchange between countries of *different productivity* as from regulated exchange or from foreign investment; and hence is a product in some measure of most international trade.'²² Thus, if there are countries with different productivity, and if there is trade between them, there is also bound to be 'exploitation' between them. The only way out under such conditions would be that either there is only one country in the world or that all are equally developed or that there is no trade between them. Only when one of these conditions is fulfilled, the 'exploitation' arising from this source can cease.

The conditions for the cessation of 'exploitation' in the Marxian sense are thus:

(1) The achievement of 'saturation-point' of capital-equipment. This involves:

(i) static population; (ii) static standard of living; (iii) cessation of technical discovery and scientific knowledge on which it depends—in short, the elimination of J.B. Clark's 'five kinds of change which are constantly in progress'.²³

Such a condition is impossible of achievement, according to Marx, if a large proportion of fixed capital exists, as its very reproduction would lead to accumulation.

(2) The lack of differential distribution of income in a society.

(3) The virtual or actual exclusion of such a society from trade contacts with other differentially developed societies.

22. *Political Economy and Capitalism*, p. 228. Italics mine.

23. The changes mentioned are the following: (i) the population is increasing; (ii) the capital is increasing; (iii) the methods of production are improving; (iv) the forms of industrial establishment are changing; (v) the wants of consumers are multiplying. Quoted from 'The Distribution of Wealth', p. 56 in F. H. Knight's *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit*, p. 33.

(4) The non-existence of persons who do not create value in the Marxian sense of the word.

All these conditions are of great importance for a full understanding of the concept of 'exploitation' in Marxian economics. But it is the fourth that is crucial for the whole theory and we suggest that it is an impossible condition for any society to fulfil. If any reinterpretation of the concept of value is attempted to make the socialist society fulfil the fourth condition, it would, we suggest, destroy the whole Marxian structure at its very foundation. How little is this point appreciated can be seen, for example, by an examination of Maurice Dobb's first simple axiom of economic law in a socialist economy. He writes: 'First of such postulates is the simple axiom that the total money value of finished consumers' goods must equal the total of wage-incomes over a given period (assuming that wages are the only form of personal money-income and that no part of personal income is voluntarily hoarded).²⁴ Given the assumptions, the axiom is a tautology, and if the phrase 'a given period' is interpreted with sufficient elasticity, it would be true of capitalism also. But what is of greater importance is Dobb's covert assumption that all personal money incomes are 'wages', i.e. *economically homogeneous in character*. By making such a statement, he *implies* that *all are value-creating in the Marxist sense*—a contention that needs strictly to be *proved* rather than assumed even without *explicit* mention.

The existence of 'exploitation' in the formal, technical sense of Marxian economics would, perhaps, be admitted by these thinkers. They may even go so far with us as to admit the impossibility of such technical 'exploitation' being absent in any complex society. But they are sure to point out that such 'exploitation' is motivated by the individual's lust for profit in a capitalist economy while it is used for the 'collective good' of the people by their representatives in a socialist system. Dobb writes, for example, 'It is the class character of capitalist economy which determines that its *leit-motif* should be profit—the augmentation of surplus-value'.²⁵ 'By contrast, in a socialist economy profit as an income-

24. *Political Economy and Capitalism*, p. 322.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 332.

category ceases to possess any significance as an economic incentive or as an interest which shapes and limits policy, for the reason that it ceases to exist as a personal revenue'.²⁶ Such statements can be found in abundance in all books on socialism and, thus, deserve the consideration of any serious student of the subject.

The term 'profit' in the Marxian economy means 'surplus value' and the 'rate of profit' means the ratio of surplus value to the total capital, including both constant and variable capital. Now it is very difficult to see that 'the augmentation of surplus value' is the *leit-motif* of a capitalist economy only, unless the socialist society is, by definition, that where the so-called 'saturation-point' has been reached. Dobb himself has admitted that 'A socialist economy would clearly be *ruled by the aim of augmenting its capital construction* at a more or less rapid rate'.²⁷ There does not seem much difference in 'the augmentation of surplus-value' and 'the augmenting of capital-construction'. The latter necessarily presupposes the former, though the former does not necessarily involve the latter. In the case of capitalism, however, the converse also mostly holds true.

The mistake seems to arise from thinking of 'profit' as a form of *personal revenue* as is evidenced in the second quotation from Dobb. Under capitalism, only a part of the appropriated surplus value is used as revenue for consumption. The rest is used as *capital* and reinvested for production. If some individual uses it as personal revenue, *ipso facto*, he ceases to be a capitalist. The emphasis on the word 'personal' is equally mistaken, for the problem of 'profit' is not a problem in micro-economics, but in macro-economics. Had it not been so, Marx would not have commended the physiocrats for transferring 'the investigation into the origin of surplus value from the sphere of circulation into the sphere of direct production',²⁸ for the individual's profit can always be understood in terms of the former. One man's gain may be under-

26. *Ibid.*, p. 334. This statement is extremely ambiguous. It leaves the possibility open that profit occurs in a socialist economy, but does not play a decisive part as it does not form a part of private revenue. As public revenue, perhaps, it does not matter much for the system.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 283. Italics mine.

28. *Theories of Surplus Values*, p. 45.

stood by another person's loss, but it cannot suffice for the whole of economy as they cancel each other out.²⁹

Profit, then, is neither personal nor revenue in the framework of Marxian economics. It is merely the appropriated surplus value by persons who do not create any value themselves and use a major part of it for reinvestment as capital and a minor part for consumption as revenue. These two parts are generally included under the identical term 'profit', but for analytical purposes it is of the utmost importance to distinguish them. To say, then, that the capitalist is motivated by profit is merely to say that he is ruled by the aim of augmenting capital construction at as fast a rate as possible. He is merely a *functionary* or *instrument* of capital accumulation and it would be too crude a mistake to be deceived by the apparent veil of individual capitalist's pursuit and appropriation of profit in the market. It is difficult to imagine how any *total* economy can be motivated by anything else *except* profit unless it has reached an absolutely static state—a point admitted by every *bourgeois* economist worth the name. A non-profit economy and a static economy are the same: they are merely different descriptions of an identical state of affairs.

It is, of course, true that the appropriation is done under perfect legal forms and by persons who themselves do not create any value. It is equally true that such persons enjoy a privileged consumption position with respect to the goods and services that a society can command. But these are hardly the conditions in respect of which a socialist society is, or could be, very different from the capitalist. Dobb has written 'Moreover, since wages in *one form or another* are the only form of income, social incentives will be exclusively associated with *work*, and the sole aim of economic policy will presumably be to increase *wages* at the most rapid possible rate'.³⁰ The ambiguity on which such writing sustains itself should be clear to any one who cares to analyse. If the income of persons who appropriate surplus value and make decisions with respect to its investment as capital is called 'wages' and, thus, assimilated into the earnings of the labourer or the peasant from

29. We are ignoring here the lack of perfect knowledge and perfect mobility without which, perhaps, even such a profit would not occur.

30. Op. cit., p. 334. Italics mine.

whom it is appropriated, then certainly it is true that 'in one form or another' wages are the only form of income in any society. But the crucial turn lies in that phrase 'in one form or another' and the unwary reader accepts without noticing the turn. If both the labourer's and the Gosplan and Politburo's members' labour is called 'work', then certainly the social incentives will be *exclusively associated* with 'work'. But does Dobb imply by the creation of this homogeneous category that both are 'value creators' in the Marxian sense of the word? If so, he should have explicitly stated this revolutionary transformation of Marx's fundamental concept and taken full responsibility for such an innovation. He would, then, have found that the so-called 'work' and 'wages' would be the only thing in any society, for his definitions had become so extensive as not to exclude any activity from their domain. Having created the homogeneity of 'work' and 'wages' through an implicit redefinition of concepts, he moves innocently to the conclusion that 'the sole aim of economic policy will presumably be to increase wages at the most rapid possible rate'. The conclusion follows inevitably if the society has not already reached 'the saturation-point' and the qualifying phrase 'presumably' seems just superfluous. But the delicate question as to *whose* wages are to be increased remains unasked, both by the author and the reader. Dobb writes as if there is no differential structure of wages, as if an increase of wages means an increase at all levels and the reader accepts it all as if it really were so.

The possibility of appropriation is derived primarily from the fact of the alienation of means of production from those who own just their labour power. This is continuously emphasized in Marxist literature with respect to capitalism. But the equal prevalence of the fact under socialism is conveniently forgotten. The legal fact of the ownership of the means of production by the state should not be allowed to *veil* the fact that the conditions of production are *effectively* alienated from the labour power which alone can work it and which has only the liberty to starve if it refused to work under conditions imposed by others.

It is generally contended that the gulf of 'alienation' is bridged in this case by the 'representative' character of the persons who make crucial decisions with respect to appropriation and investment. The term 'representative' is derived from the dictionary of

political vocabulary and is primarily used for describing a government elected periodically on the basis of secret, adult, universal franchise from the competing parties, groups or individuals which have a fair amount of freedom to propagate their rival views before the electorate. When the term 'representative' is used for the socialist state, however, it means no such thing. It is merely a synonym for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or rather the 'dictatorship of the *elite* of the communist party', which is the true representative of the proletariat. It should be noted that even the dictatorship of the proletariat would be a dictatorship of the minority, as in the so-called 'weakest links of the chain' proletarians, if we exclude the peasantry, are few in number.

It is also usually argued that large-scale technique and complex productive relations necessitate such an ownership by the state. Dobb, for example, writes: 'Since a regime of large-scale technique and complex productive relations could not *revert* to petty property and the small-scale production which this entailed, the negative act of expropriation must necessarily take the positive form of socialization, in the sense of the transference of land and capital into the collective ownership of the workers' state'.³¹ But he has forgotten that in underdeveloped economies, which are the weakest links in the chain and where socialist revolutions are supposed to take place, no such large-scale techniques or such complex productive relations exist and, thus, the question of *reverting* cannot arise. The problem is not one of 'reverting', but of the appropriation of surplus value for purposes of investment or consumption—in short, of 'exploitation'. This cannot be performed without the alienation of the conditions of production from labour power. The collectivization of the peasantry and the liquidation of the Kulaks³² was not necessitated by the difficulty of 'reverting' but by the difficulty of 'exploiting'. In fact, even in spheres where large-scale production is economically wasteful, the socialist governments have shown little solicitude for encouraging them or even letting them be. It has generally remained un-

31. Dobb, p. 77. Italics mine.

32. The Kulaks are regarded generally as rich peasants. But, in the south, in the 'thirties, a peasant was a Kulak, if he owned more than a horse, one cow, and more than five hectares of land'. *Communism and Peasantry*, Ramswarup, p. 45. Also Chapter IV, *passim*.

noticed that the theoretic structure of Marxian economics can equally well lead to an attempt at the widest possible individual ownership of the means of production based upon the invention of a technology which can simultaneously improve production and be of such relatively low cost as to be affordable by most individuals or small groups of individuals. Those areas of production where such a technology is impossible of achievement can be owned by the state which should 'represent' the people, not in some metaphysical sense, but in the ordinary sense of common political usage.

It seems, therefore, that neither the so-called difficulties of 'reverting' nor the real 'representative' character of the state do, in the least, mitigate the 'exploitation' on which the economic development in a socialist economy is based. Nor is the situation any different with respect to the privileged consumption position of persons who themselves do not create any value. If anything, the facts are more clear and the veil thinner than under capitalist conditions. The differences, we suggest, emanate primarily from the fact that the economic development under socialism is *imitated* rather than *created* and not because it is socialism rather than capitalism. In any case, the differences are relatively minor when compared with the basic similarities revealed by an analysis that uses the Marxian concepts to illuminate the phenomenon of economic development under its various forms. How far the similarities revealed reflect on the adequacy of the theoretic framework and the consequent value judgements based upon it is another question and can hardly be answered here.

ANTHROPOLOGY—THE BONDED SCIENCE?

A REVIEW-ARTICLE

The essays in honour of Professor Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf collected in this volume¹ derive their unity from a direct or indirect concern with the issues raised by him in his *Morals and Merit*, published in 1967. Yet, the theoretical underpinning of most of these articles is very little, as they seem concerned with describing those aspects of a society or culture which perhaps the anthropologists consider to be the most important for their understanding. But if one were to ask why the same type of studies have not been made of Western societies and cultures, one would find it difficult to get a satisfactory answer.

The very titles of most of the articles reveal the range of concerns considered significant by anthropologists in the understanding of non-western societies and cultures. To give but a few examples, we have articles on the 'Moral Significance of Food among Assamese Hindus', 'Understanding a Hindu Temple in Bengal', 'Envy and Equality: Some Aspects of Munda Values', 'An Enactment of Perfect Morality: the Meaning and Social Context of a South Indian Ritual Drama', and 'Caste: A Moral Structure and a Social System of Control'. It is obvious that there is a heavy emphasis on what would be considered by most people as marginal issues in the understanding of their society and culture. The majority of articles deal not only with marginal issues but also with marginal groups in such societies. They deal, for example, with Tibetans who moved into India and Nepal after its occupation by China, Buddhists in Nepal, which is predominantly a Hindu Society, the Nyinba group of approximately 1000 individuals resident in Nepal's north-western Humla district, the

1. Adrian C. Mayer, ed. *Culture and Morality, Essays in honour of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 270.

Gondas of Chhota Nagpur and a remote Bengal village where a new style of Hindu temple was constructed.

One can, of course, have little quarrel with detailed micro-studies of particular groups or cultures or even of one aspect of the lives of a particular people, provided the aim is to test the author's hypothesis or to reach some relatively general understanding through a study of that specific aspect or to find some principle which may possibly help in the understanding of other groups, societies, and cultures. One may even indulge in 'description for the sake of description' in the belief that everything is significant in itself and deserves to be preserved for posterity. One could hope that the data so collected may be of possible use and help to others who may wish to utilize the same in practical or theoretical contexts. Still, an academic outsider may be excused if he feels baffled to find that so many articles in this volume give little evidence of theoretical concern either in the content of what they choose to observe or in the reasons for their observation. This is even more surprising as most of the articles do refer to Professor Fürer-Haimendorf's work *Morals and Merit*, which has some interesting theoretical contentions to make, both explicitly and implicitly. Yet, the only two papers which deal directly with the central issues raised by Fürer-Haimendorf are those of F.G. Bailey and Adrian Mayer. Even these deal only tangentially with them. Thus the radical distinction between morals and merit, and its relevance for the understanding of societies and cultures in general, and that of the Indian society and culture in particular, does not seem to have been carried any further by the writers in this volume even though all of them have been his students or colleagues and the editor explicitly chose to focus, as he says, 'on a single work of Fürer-Haimendorf's thereby hoping to give the volume a common set of themes'. (p. xv)

Even a cursory glance at Fürer-Haimendorf's *Morals and Merit* would reveal that there are a number of half-implicit, half-explicit contentions occurring throughout the book. The first is the relation between the moral system and the level of techno-economic development of a society. In fact, his discussion of the problem of morality and its relation to society ranges from the most primitive food-gatherers to those who are almost at the threshold of one of the most advanced civilizations we have

known in history. The second main contention of Fürer-Haimendorf seems to be about the great variety of moral attitudes that prevail amongst different people and the radical difference within the moral attitudes themselves, between what he has chosen to call morals in the strict sense of the term and merit. The former is well known while the latter has not been paid much attention to by most writers in the field. In the moral domain itself, there is a distinction between the situation where a violation of the moral norm is punished by the society and the one where some supernatural punishment automatically follows the violation of the rule. Further, there are radical differences between actions supposed to have an adverse effect upon human beings. Some of these are distinctly immoral in the sense that they adversely affect the group to which one belongs. 'Others, however, may only debase the ritual status of an individual and expose the agent to pollution which may or may not be contagious'. 'The cause of this pollution may or may not be a culpable deed and there is hence no direct relation between a person's moral quality and his or her ritual status'. (*Morals and Merit*, p. 213.) To give but one example, there are societies in which a person will lose his ritual status if he has unwittingly eaten of the food prepared by an untouchable or someone who had the misfortune to be beaten with leather slippers, even when he may not have been guilty of any moral fault at all. There is a further distinction where a person in such a polluted state, affects the entire community or only those who come in actual contact with him or just himself, even when the himself is not the source of this pollution.

The distinction is relevant, for in case pollution is supposed to affect any other person or persons, it has a moral dimension and cannot be conceptually distinguished from the state of impurity into which it puts the individual. The distinction between the state produced by ritual pollution and the one produced by an immoral act is difficult to define, though it is certainly there. In fact, a morally virtuous action thus may itself be seen in diverse ways—as an act commanded by God or one of the gods or being in accordance with an impersonal moral order or as one that produces merit for the person who does it or that which is good-in-itself without regard to anything else.

The distinction between morals, merit and pollution for the understanding of interrelationships between men in society and the relationship of all of these to the techno-economic base on which the social group survives and perpetuates itself, may be said to be the key issues raised in Fürer-Haimendorf's *Morals and Merit*. Besides these, there is, of course, the added issue of the absence or presence of formal institutional organization of sanctions for the violation of accepted norms in each of these dimensions in a particular society. There are, it is obvious, innumerable issues regarding these, both at the theoretical and observational levels, which demand to be pursued further. Yet, most of the articles in the volume under review, instead of pursuing them further, deal with them only peripherally. F.G. Bailey's article on 'Spiritual Merit and Morality' and Adrian Mayer's on 'Public Service and Individual Merit in a Town of Central India' come, as I have mentioned earlier, closest to the theme of Fürer-Haimendorf's earlier work on the subject. Bailey, in fact, starts with a quotation from the earlier work where Fürer-Haimendorf contrasts the essentially prudential morality of most tribal societies with the so-called transcendental morality in Hindu society which gets smothered in most people, 'by a constant anxiety to satisfy the demand of caste and kin-group, and to avoid any action detrimental to one's status within the society', a situation which is contrasted with that of Buddhist societies where 'the interests of society are secondary to the interests of the individual in relation to the supernatural order.'²

The main contention of Bailey is that even within non-prudential morality a distinction should be drawn between particular acts which may be regarded as right or wrong and the person who performs them, and hence is regarded as a good or bad person and also between the person who is judged to be good and bad because of what he *does* and the one who is good because of what he *is*, independent of what he *does*.³ The second dis-

2. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Morals and Merit*, p. 277. It is strange to find Bailey not quoting the last sentence of the paragraph or the relevant contrast with the Buddhist ethics in the succeeding paragraph which form an integral part of the contention Fürer-Haimendorf is making.
3. It is not quite clear if Bailey would make the same distinction about a person's being bad independently of what he does.

inction has not been presented by Bailey in the same way as I have done. Rather, he relates it to the idea of spiritual merit which once one has earned it—presumably in a sufficient quantity—one is exempt from moral evaluation of one's action on the part of others and perhaps also of one's own self. This he calls transcendental morality and is indicated by 'ideas of spiritual merit manifested in the person of a holy man'. (p. 39) He admits that 'it is indeed a paradox that the highest form of goodness is manifested in a status which rises above moral judgements and moral accountability'. (p. 30) However, he suggests that the situation is not so unusual as it is also met with in 'everyone's everyday experience'. For example, 'a moral⁴ relationship with another person is one which is intrinsically valued, an end in itself'. (p. 39) As such relationships form a necessary element in every society, he concludes that all people 'who seem to live by the rules of prudential morality ... experience this other more personal and more sublime form of transcendental morality'. (p. 40)

Adrian Mayer, on the other hand, concentrates on the distinction between various merit-making or rather merit-earning activities. He points out a radical distinction between essentially public acts, such as conspicuous expenditure of wealth or display of martial prowess or conduct inspired by sentiments of compassion for all living beings, resulting in spiritual merit, and those which 'are unlikely to be classed as meritorious unless they are performed secretly and unrecognised by the public'. (p. 153) The article is an empirical study of the concept of *sevā*, that is, public service, particularly in the political context, and it is found that in the Hindu tradition 'there is...a notion that true public service, like the true gift or offering, is that which is secretly made'. (p. 157) The concept of *sevā* is, of course, used in other contexts also, such as the *sevā* of a deity or that of a disciple (*celā*) for a master (*guru*). It is argued that 'true *sevā*, involving a sacrifice of time, effort and non-attachment, can put public workers in a position superior to those of the public that they serve—perhaps in the same way as the performance of austerities and the act of renunciation can bring an individual more spiritual power, and even a superiority over the god he worships'. (p. 162) The merit earned

4. One wonders why the adjective 'moral' is being used here.

by this peculiar type of *sevā* is, according to Mayer, of a different kind. 'It is linked with detachment in the sense of not seeking reciprocation, of privacy, and of the selfish intention of the actor. Its reward is a spiritual strength which is not seen as a specific and reciprocal reward at all.' (p. 169) Perhaps, the more important point that has been made by Mayer in this connection is to point out the peculiar nature of these cultural ideals which, though intrinsically impossible to attain, influence actual patterns of behaviour and attitudes between persons. As he writes, 'We see here again a cultural form, almost if not entirely impossible to attain, and yet influencing actual patterns of behaviour and attitudes between the contracting parties'. (p. 166) And, further, '... the ideal pattern is of two quite separate actions between two non-attached (disinterested) persons, neither of whom seeks a return—but the actual situation is one of transaction interdependence'. (p. 167)

It is difficult to believe that Mayer is not aware of the fact that almost all cultural ideals share this characteristic and that it could not be a peculiar characteristic of Hindu society alone. In case there are some peculiarities in this regard in the Hindu cultural ethos, there should have been a special attempt to bring it out through a comparative study of the problem concerned. In fact, there is at least a seemingly straight contradiction between the contention of Bailey that in all cultures there are relationships which are intrinsically valued and Mayer's contention that in the actual real world it is almost entirely impossible to have such a relationship. As Mayer is the editor of the volume under review, it is surprising that he took no notice of Bailey's contention in the same volume or at least tried to meet it to some extent in his article which treated the same theme from a different angle.

The incongruence between the ideal and the actual and the attempts to bridge the two is the theme of a number of papers in the present volume, as is the question regarding the boundary of the unit within which moral considerations usually play their effective roles. While Fürer-Haimendorf had emphasized the diversity in different cultures, a number of authors focus attention upon the diversity *within* cultures. Barbara Aziz writes: 'Just as we can appreciate the diversity of morals across various South Asian cultures, as verified by Fürer-Haimendorf's important

contribution in this area, so also might we recognize that further diversity exists within each culture. Among Highland Buddhists, for example, sets of friends administer community justice alongside a Buddhist moral system directed by laws of *Karma*.' (p. 18) In fact, she suggests that 'citizens are constrained from acting in complete accord with their quest for merit where it may infringe on certain social needs'. (p. 18) The same point is further elaborated by Nancy Levine when she asks us to distinguish between moral precepts as embodied in texts, implicit values as embedded in actual acts of moral evaluation, the behaviour of people, and the individual's own apprehension or understanding of all of these. These may conflict in many situations and pose moral dilemmas for individuals which may be difficult to resolve satisfactorily. As she writes: 'The various cultural messages encountered from given moral precepts, implicit societal values, inner impulses and public valuation of conduct—may well prove contradictory.' (p. 123) One may 'point to a set of unvarying moral precepts, fixed in Buddhist textual traditions to which all Nyinba overtly subscribe. On the other hand, there are also implicit values which are manifested in actual patterns of behaviour.' (p. 122) Nancy Levine has forgotten that even the texts may contain contradictory precepts and require interpretation on the part of those who accept their authority. In fact, a further disturbing factor which has not been noticed by others is pointed out by Lionel Caplan in his article 'Morality and Polyethnic Identity in Urban South India'. He contends that 'the employment of different classificatory criteria to distinguish several varieties of ethnic identity can lead to individuals being subjected to conflicting claims on their moral allegiances.' (p. 64) This may provide some manoeuvrability in moral choices, though it can also lead to tragic moral dilemmas for individuals placed in such a situation. The moral boundaries are thus essentially shifting in character and, as the author observes: 'The tendency to find within relatively fixed groups or categories the limits beyond which moral constraints cease to apply may overlook the fact that *such boundaries can change* or be *differently perceived*, so that moral commitments to the collective may neither be uniform among various members nor constant for any one member'. (p. 64; italics mine) Multiple role-identifications and the possible conflict between them has been

well known in sociological literature, but the author has neither cared to refer to it nor shown how polyethnic identity differs from it.

Most of these articles make only slight emendations to Fürer-Haimendorf's formulations on the subject. The most radical questioning of its very foundations, however, comes from T.N. Madan who argues that 'the metaphysical underpinning of the arguments in *Morals and Merits* is recognizably and, perhaps, inevitably that of western philosophy' (p. 127) and that 'the anthropological study of moral choices in South Asian societies will be enriched if it is carried out in the light of native categories of thought'. (p. 149) Madan's article is a brilliant study of the problem of moral choices as reflected in the literary works of a culture, where presumably it is the *native categories of thought* in terms of which the problem is posed. The warning against an 'eurocentric view of moral choices' is welcome, but it is difficult to see how the essay 'is an effort to reaffirm the dialectical nature of anthropological knowledge'. (p. 149) In fact it is not even clear what could possibly be meant by the dialectical nature of such knowledge if it is being contended that there is no universal framework of knowledge in this field and that the only meaningful cognitive enterprise in the study of cultures is to study them in the light of those categories of thought which are immanent to the culture itself. In fact, Madan's approving reference to Potter who suggests that 'the ultimate concern of the Hindu is not with choice, which is imprisonment, but with freedom' (p. 149) is also supported to some extent by Ralph W. Nicholas when he writes: 'Dichotomies based upon mutual exclusion do not comprehend the simultaneous assessment of superiority/inferiority and of appropriateness that are present in the Hindu evaluation'. (p. 188) However, S.M. Greenwold seems to suggest that it is not so much the individual who is the locus of morality but the caste into which one is born and to which one belongs. As he points out: 'because sin and uncleanness are seen as homologous, there is a specific interconnection between morality and caste, neither of which is held to be distinct from a concern with purity and pollution' and that 'it is for this reason that caste is a structure of morality'. (p. 101)

The obsessive concern with purity/pollution for the understanding of Asian, particularly Hindu, societies and its specific location

in what may be called the 'kitchen-cultures' of these societies is not absent from the papers included in this volume. Audrey Cantil's 'The Moral Significance of Food among Assamese Hindus' is a classic illustration of this concern. She argues almost for a kitchen-centric view of the Hindu culture amongst the Assamese Hindus as if their whole world were to be viewed from this vantage point in order to become intelligible. According to her 'to understand the significance of food among the Assamese is not therefore to master a complex of technical procedures and ritual restrictions but to learn the nuances of a language in which spirituality, status differentials, identity and difference, amity and conflict find their variable expression'. (p. 62) One wonders if the Assamese Hindu will accept the view that his significant, meaningful, valuational universe is primarily kitchen-centric in character and is accessible only through a deciphering of the behaviour centred around it. I may also add that the terms *kaccā* and *pakā* as defined by her on p. 46 seem to be used differently in Assam from how they are used in areas around western U.P. and Delhi.

The papers of M.S.A. Rao, Hilary Standing, Sachchidananda and Bruce Elliot Tapper are concerned with other issues. Rao is concerned with the diverse ways in which social change is sought to be legitimized by its protagonists as evidenced in the case history of the SNDP movement in Kerala. Hilary Standing points out that 'the language of economic transactions is at the same time a language of morality' (p. 234) and argues that 'envy ... is a constant potentiality in any society or social group which positively values equality, and it is related to equality as emulousness is related to hierarchy in the wider caste system'. (p. 237) He, of course, fails to ask why emulousness should be confined to a caste society alone as hierarchical relations are found in non-caste societies also. Nor does he feel the necessity of testing the hypothesis about the relationship between envy and equality through a cross-cultural study of other societies which are predominantly egalitarian in their ideology. Sachchidananda's is mostly a descriptive study of values, morality and ethics among the Mundas of Chhota Nagpur, and though he is concerned with the same people as Hilary Standing, his data does not support Standing's contention in any significant way. Bruce Tapper sees the enactment of a

traditional morality play as analogous 'to ritual acts of worship (*pujā*) and merit (*punyam*)' (p. 239) and is of the opinion that 'ritual occasions appear to mediate between the moral ideal and everyday reality. In ritual, in order to achieve worldly benefits it becomes necessary to offer token acts of generosity and selflessness. The pursuit of selfish familial goals in ritual thus becomes legitimate only when there is public recognition of the morality of wider social obligations and responsibilities'. (p. 258)

Each of these contentions is embedded in a field study carefully done in the best tradition of anthropological studies and arises naturally from it. The emphasis is, in a certain sense, on the reporting of the actual study and not on the conclusions that emerge from it. Yet, from the theoretical perspective it is the conclusions that are important, though the sheer descriptive interest in knowing the varieties of cultures and societies that exist may also be there. The latter, however, predominates only in the early stages of a cognitive inquiry. It may, of course, persist in its journalistic or historical form to satisfy perennial human interests of another kind. That anthropological studies published in the year 1981 should show little sign, if any, of moving beyond the descriptive field study stage should be of some concern to all those who are seriously interested in the understanding of human societies and cultures. What is perhaps even more disturbing is to find these studies stuck in the mould set for them by early studies by persons whose way of looking at the societies and cultures of Asia and Africa was coloured, consciously or unconsciously, by their politico-economic relationship with these countries. The aspects singled out for observation then, seem to have an obsessive fascination even now. What else would one say of what may be called the 'kitchen-centric' or 'pollution-centric' character of most of these studies? It would be different if the anthropologists had discovered over the decades that these were the crucial parameters for the study of societies and cultures. But there is hardly any evidence for this. For, if it were so, there would have been studies of kitchen-cultures and dining-table syndromes of the western societies also. Or, there would have been detailed studies of the avoidance relationships between different racial and ethnic groups in most western societies. That this has not been done even by Asian or African anthropologists speaks volumes about the unconscious

assumption that the proper subject of anthropological study is underdeveloped or undeveloped societies alone and not society in general.

This perhaps also explains why all the development in the other social sciences seems to have left anthropology untouched as if they had nothing to do with the understanding of man and society, that students from London and New York, Birmingham and Chicago, Sussex and San Diego should find nothing of interest to study in their own societies and come to India to study the strange habits of the human species in the sub-continent and that Indian scholars should not only acquiesce but follow them in doing what they do without feeling the slightest peculiarity about it, is a telling commentary on the current state of the academia in the countries of the Third World. It is time that anthropologists, if they are convinced of the cognitive worthwhileness of their pursuits, study the so-called advanced societies of the west in the same way, and with the same foci, with which they have studied the societies of Asia and Africa until now. Also, if they feel that it is only an outsider who can see better, then let anthropologists in Asian and African countries study the societies of western countries and *vice versa*. Possibly, as a first step in this direction, the ICSSR could fund a project for the study of, say, kitchen-culture in the U.K. and the avoidance-pollution relations between the whites and the blacks in the U.S.A. Later, perhaps, we could have detailed work on different aspects of the human species in the western hemisphere resulting in epoch-making contribution to human knowledge with sub-titles such as these:

1. Confession and Morality in an Isolated Catholic Community in a Remote Part of England Bordering on Ireland.
2. Morality and Polyethnic Identity in Some Areas of New York City.
3. The Status Significance of Food and Table Manners of the Upper-class Elite in an Aristocratic Suburb of London.
4. Public School Ties—A Moral Structure and Social System of Control in England.
5. Perspectives on Love, Morality and Affect in High School Intersexual Relationships in England.
6. Moral Choice—An Essay on the Unity of Physical and Spiritual Love in the Novels of D.H. Lawrence.

7. An Enactment of Contemporary Morality: The Meaning and Social Context of Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
8. The Place of Socks, Shoes and Neckties in the Social Culture of the Western Man.

I wonder how a western scholar would review such a book.

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