

# Asian Identity and Asian Cultures

(Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios)

Culture is an extremely nebulous term. For the sake of clarity we will begin with a distinction between internal culture and external culture or personal culture and culture as a human social artifact. The two are related to each other.

Internal or personal culture is a structuring of the intellect, a shaping of the mind and will, a development of tastes and sensitivity, a cultivation of attitudes, resulting in an altered type of behaviour, experiencing, and interpretation of experiencing. We speak of someone as a cultured man, meaning that he is learned and cultivated, has acquired refinement of taste and sharper sensitivities, and has adequate restraint and self-control to make his behaviour noble.

External Culture on the other hand is humanity's way of structuring reality, both social and natural; a way of dealing with each other and with strangers, a network of structured relations and unwritten rules of behaviour; rites and forms of worship, art, music, literature, dance, drama, handicrafts, architecture, dress, customs and manners and the like. It refers to social conduct, human relations, and the totality of modifications wrought by human action on the inherited environment.

External culture is shaped by internal culture and vice versa. One receives its vitality and dynamic quality from the other; and is in close symbolic and creative interaction with each other. External culture creates new needs, activities and expectations in internal culture and vice versa.

I am indebted to Prof. Venant Cauchy of Montreal University's Department of philosophy for the distinction and the relation between internal and external culture.

But culture is a question that goes deeper to issues of meaning, identity and self-understanding.

Our identity as Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Sri Lankas, etc. has many levels - only a few of which we are consciously aware of. Our conscious awareness is only a small segment of our self-awareness. I suggest that there are at least five levels of this self, which we can identify,

(1) I am aware that I am Paulos Gregorios, a particular individual with a personal ancestry, personal history, a projected personal image, a particular kind of experience and training. That is the most obvious of my identity-level - my conscious awareness.

(2) There is a second level - my personal unconscious. Into this level has gone all that I have done, said and experienced, particularly those elements which I do not retain in my conscious awareness, but comes up in dreams, affects my behaviour, determines my allergies and inhibitions, my affinities and interests. This is a second level - much of it related to my birth trauma and infancy experiences.

(3) Then there is the racial unconscious, within which there are the specific experiences of my ancestors as a tribe or as a nation, as well as the things that lie at a deeper level, derived from the experience of the human race as it emerges from its animal past and goes through the twilight of human consciousness. This third level is what Jung called the collective unconscious or the racial memory. This third level is a much more powerful factor in our personal identity than we are often willing to concede.

(4) Even below this third level of the collective unconscious is the level that some call the "psychoid material" or the level at which we have an integral relation to and participate in the history of the whole created order - animal, plant and inorganic. This was stated by Eastern Christian fathers like Gregory of Nyssa. A human person incorporates within oneself the organic and the inorganic, the animal, the vegetative and the material. The human mind in its deeper levels remembers this our unity with all the three worlds of creation - animal, plant and matter. This unconscious awareness is in our brain, in our flesh, and to ignore it and reduce awareness to mere conscious awareness has been part of the cause of the ecological catastrophe.

(5) At the deepest level, the human body-mind is aware of the source of its origin. What emerges in religion is the deepest level of awareness. The 'primitive' human consciousness was more immediately aware of this than the modern "rational" mind,

which concentrates on conscious awareness. Some western thinkers, both Marxist and Western liberal, have sought to find the origin of religion in some intellectual or emotional activity of early man-like the ear of the elements. Religions awareness has been the most powerful factor in the development of the human species, precisely because its roots were not in thought or feeling, but in something deeper-the "body meaning", the deepest level of awareness. Awareness of the Divine as the source of our being did not come through a process of ratiocination, but comes from the most ancient part of our brain which retains the most deeply held memories of our species. We are aware that we come from the Divine and that we need to find that foundation again. These deepest awareness can be denied and negated by conscious awareness, That is what has in fact as a result of the Enlightenment. In Buddhism and Taoism the conscious analysis may ignore any discussion on the God, problem. But **Pratitya-samutpada** doctrine in Madhyamika Buddhism clearly states that the theory of "conditioned inter-dependent co-origination

of the world refers only to our present experience and not to the actual origin of all beings. In other words Buddhism does not deny the divine origin of all existence. And in Taoism, both Tao, as well as Yin-Yang are divine names, similar to Father and Son in Christianity or **To on** and **logos** in Greek pagan philosophy.

The point in speaking about these five levels is to say that culture is not a product of only the conscious awareness of the individual, but rather a product of the five levels of the human mind. Asian cultures are especially expressive of these five levels and this is not the time to go into much greater detail on the nature of culture. It has to be affirmed, however that if the liberation of the Asian mind from its captivity to the European Enlightenment is to become a fact we will have to deal with more than merely the rational criteria of conscious awareness, but will have to evolve ways of giving expression to our christian faith in terms of all the five levels of our Asian awareness.

# Introduction to Theme Cultural Identity

<sup>Cultural</sup>  
Concept of Identity is quite ambiguous.

Take the notion identity. If (a) and (b), + (c) are identical, then (a), (b) and (c) have no identity at all of their own in relation to each other. Any <sup>self-</sup>identity that (a) or (b) or (c) can have is dependent on the non-identity of each with the others. This is so even in the Holy Trinity. If Father, Son and Holy Spirit were ~~to~~ wholly identical, then the one would be indistinguishable from the other.

In fact the identity of each person of the Trinity is expressed in Tradition in terms of that person's non-identity with the others.

i.e. The Father is the begetter, and not begotten or proceeding

The Son is begotten and not begetter or proceeding

The H.S. is proceeding from the Father and not begotten or begetter.

Self-identity demands non-identity at least in some particulars.

The loss of specificity or non-identity in some particulars means loss of identity.

Identity can be lost in the loss of specificity.

identity, in so far as your specific name and a distinctive specific number which is not given to anybody else, your non-identity is affirmed, but it is also a hint to my identity, in so far as I am reduced to a card which is in most respects identical with that held by others - size, colour, design etc.

This problem will remain with us and we must come to terms with it at some depth. The classical distinction given by the Cappadocian Fathers in relation to person and nature (hypostasis and physis) is important to recall.

That which is common to all belongs to nature ( $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma = \kappa\omicron\iota\nu\eta \tau\omicron\iota\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ) and person is that which distinguishes by something that makes one oneself - ( $\iota\delta\iota\omicron\tau\iota\varsigma = \iota\delta\iota\omicron\nu \tau\omicron\iota\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ).

Identity requires non-identity. But total non-identity does not exist, either in the Creator or in the creation. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united by one *ousia*, without difference. Peter, Paul and John are united by their common participation in a single nature called the human. The difference or specificity of Peter, Paul and John are ~~not~~ dependent on their sharing in that which is common - namely their humanity. Without that which is common, the specific Peter, Paul and John could not exist.

So far we have referred primarily to the question of personal identity. We could move forward in our reflection by taking a quick look at class identity or group identity.

Take, for example, the two groups or species - sheep and goats. The identity of a sheep as a sheep and not a goat, is dependent on its being different from a goat in some specific respects - subtle differences in body shape, eating habits, behaviour patterns etc. But the identity of a sheep as sheep is also even in a much larger measure on its common qualities which it shares with its own group. The mere fact of being different from a goat will not make it a sheep, for a cow or a rabbit would also be different from a goat, but that does not make it a ~~goat~~ sheep.

It is important to point out such trivial things in order to avoid confusion in reflecting about identity. Identity is not grounded in difference alone. Non-identity with others does not necessarily confer identity. A person's identity is not necessarily greater because he is more different from ~~others~~ <sup>persons</sup> ~~than any other~~. For in that case, a human being without two hands without two feet and without two eyes would have a great identity. We regard a person as having a greater self-hood or personality in so far as he embodies in a greater measure that which is essential for human nature. We should not fall

into the error of looking at non-identity ~~as~~ or specificity as the basis of self-identity.

Now let us move on to the realm of cultural identity. We find more problems when we come to the question of culture and what it means. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines culture as "training and refinement of mind, tastes and manners; the condition of being thus trained and refined; the intellectual side of civilization".

The German definition seems better "die Summe der Bestrebungen einer Gemeinschaft die Grundbedürfnisse der menschlichen Natur nach Nahrung, Kleidung, Obdach, Schutz, Fürsorge und Zusammenhalt und der Meisterung der natürlichen Umwelt zu befriedigen und untereinander auszugleichen; (2) die Hilfsmittel zu diesen Leistungen und ihr objektiver Ertrag usw. (3) die Bestrebungen nach Veredelung, Verfeinerung und Formung der menschlichen Persönlichkeit unter Bändigung und Sublimierung ihrer Triebnatur." (Der Grosse Brockhaus)

It is interesting that Oxford intellectualizes and individualizes even the meaning of the word. That is itself part of Oxford Culture.

The question before us is primarily in relation to Human Identity in nature, science and society. What we find is that the simple statement of the relation between science-technology and culture is itself misleading - i.e. that science-technology is by nature universal while culture is by nature local, and that there is some inevitable tension and conflict

Language - Sum-Total of "epos" &  
the complementation of the essential  
anthropism of the human  
reality.

excess  
possibilities  
Man's  
Satz  
und  
Aufgabe

Man's deed nature is his real  
nature, but freedom whether it  
is to be achieved by technology

Humanity consists in the humanity  
of that which is alien to man,  
the first being man himself

Nature is a technologized phenomenon

The Sacred as something extraneous to man  
in the mythologized

Mythologized Religiosity

There is mythopoetic  
religiosity

Man has  
original nature  
It was being  
in the beginning

Historical scenario

# Culture and Theological Training

## A few random thoughts

(Dr. Paulos Ilai Gresson)

We have often talked about indigenisation in theology. Sometimes we have used the word 'acculturation', a word not found in most dictionaries. The problem is how does Christian theological training see the problem of culture, and how ~~we~~ we deal with that problem.

Richard Niebuhr gave us a set of paradigms in which to see culture in relation to Christ (Christ and Culture), Christ above culture, against culture, Christ in culture and so on.

Paul Tillich gave us a definition of culture "all the expressions of the human spirit in a given time and place - language, art, science, architecture, philosophy, technology." Every culture, according to Tillich, is a ~~for~~ specific way of looking at life and a unique synthesis of value judgments, beliefs, practices, purposes, loyalties, hopes and aspirations, fears and anxieties. Tillich practically identified culture and religion by making both centre around "ultimate concern", making religion the ~~no-mono~~-animating core of culture, its



value-creating matrix. Such a religion may be organized or not, consciously held or not. It may also exist as a substratum for various religions and ~~the~~ secular life-approaches in a given society.

Contemporary theology has shifted its focus from culture to <sup>justice in the</sup> socio-economic framework and to the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, on the one hand, and to meditation, liturgy and personal fulfilment, on the other. There has been a cultural revolution in the West, a counter-culture syndrome which operates largely by "negation", a radical "no" to the status quo. The Roman Catholic Michael Novak, in his pre-rightist days wrote as follows about this protest:

"The student protestants are saying the old doctrines are wrong, the theories are inadequate, the professors are blind to too many realities of life. The reformation is theoretical as well as practical. We have to revise our conception of knowledge and the role of science, our view of ourselves and of our world. The issues involved, in fact, sound like metaphysical or theological issues.....

"The road to personal liberation is not private or through meditation,

~~but~~

but political. Awareness grows through conscious, reflective, accurate action. The separation between thought and action, which present university life enforces, seems to the students illegitimate . . . .

"They do not wish to be anti-intellectual, but the one available intellectual language is abhorrent to them. Moreover, it is impossible for them to return to the Classics, the Great books or the humanists—the recovery of a tradition that has now lapsed would turn them into historians, whereas it is the present and the future they most want to absorb and to comprehend. Had they the language, one feels, many of them would like to articulate clearly what is happening now, and thus produce new classics expressing our own cultural era"

(Michael Novak, A Theology for Radical Politics, New Yorker, Herder + Herder, 1969 pp. 86-88)

But the Counter-culture Syndrome is also played out now. What remains is the

old Christian patristic concept, highlighted by Karl Marx, that theory and practice should always go together, that the head grows only through the hand, that good theory can come only from practice.

Culture is where humanity shapes itself, by transforming nature into something human, creative, expressive of the truth, love and beauty that is in God. Culture, including art, architecture, music, literature, drama, dance, cinema, the journals, the festivals, the religious cult forms, sports, conservation of the environment, the building of a city, the way we treat the poor and the marginalized, the way we dress and eat and care for each other; culture is that which is cultivated by humanity, including agriculture, industry, the services and the information.

It is inseparable from religion. Any culture, even when it claims to be secular, has a religious frame and basic convictions about the nature of reality, God and humanity. We are not talking of culture as refinement and breeding, which is a basically individualistic and elitist approach. We mean by culture that

nature given to it as an endowment.

~~is on~~  
X      X      X  
Culture and Theology

We have in our time, tried to make so many false distinctions and separations - the two most famous notations being Church/~~State~~ ~~State~~ and Sacred/secular. Equally disastrous is the attempt to make distinctions and separations between Culture and Religion, or Christianity and Culture.

At the heart of Christianity is the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Today, many, who claim to be Christians, do not believe that the Incarnation is a fact, and try to assimilate Christ into purely human categories, ignoring Christ's God-nature which is the structure and base of his human nature. The separation of the divine and the human leads to other separations like Sacred/secular and culture/religion. God's becoming incarnate in human nature means, as the Fathers said,



the "whole lump" (holon to ~~phurama~~ phurama; Gal 5:9) is now leavened with the leaven of Christ, and no part of human culture is left untouched by the presence of Christ in humanity.

It is the failure to understand this aspect of the Incarnation that is at the root of most mistaken conceptions of the Religion/culture or culture/Theology relationship. There is no division of the world into sacred and secular or religious and non-religious. ~~The~~ Good religion, like the Incarnation, must leaven the whole lump, like yeast hidden in three measures of meal.

(neon phurama) The Church is a new lump, and the Kingdom is its new leaven (1 Cor 5:7). The leaven of the Kingdom must spread to the whole of human society; but it does so by first permeating the 'new lump', the Community of the Church. The Church develops a culture of its own, which will then spread by emulation.

This was what the Protestant missionaries of the 18th Century did in Bengal, in Madras Christian College, and in other centres. By embodying a certain ~~set~~ pattern of life with a specific value ~~to~~ created, culturally speaking,

A new lump in Indian society  
then led to a Renaissance in Indian  
religious life itself - witness Raja Ram  
Moham Roy, Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo,  
the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj,  
Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna mission.

It is precisely at the point  
at which the 18th century ~~Christian~~ Protestant  
missionaries like Carey, Marshman, and Miller  
succeeded that the Indian Christian community  
is today failing. We are impotent to  
create the kind of cultural ferment  
that those European Christians created.  
There are many reasons for this impotence.  
We are not, as Christians, racially  
different from other Indians, nor have we  
come here as ~~part of~~ conquerors and  
imperialists. Our impact cannot therefore  
be as powerful as theirs. But they had  
a style of life, embodying values which  
made an impression on our people.  
We do not, as Christian communities,  
or even as individual Christians, embody  
such a life that is radically different  
from that of our Hindu, Muslim or Sikh brethren.  
In fact our style of life is so similar to  
theirs. Is this not what our Lord meant

When he spoke about the "Salt losing its Savour" (Mt 5:13, Mk 9:50, Lk 14:34).

The question of culture for Christian theology in India is a two-fold question (a) cultural critique, and (b) cultural embodiment. The first is easier, especially for us academics, but even for us it is not so easy as one may think.

### Theology and the Cultural Critique

The Indian Church as a whole, Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, has so far not shown much creativity in theology. All our theological disputes are of the kind that have arisen in the west, and created by following one or other western type.

In order for the Indian Church to be able to fulfil its function as a critic of present-day Indian Culture it will need two elements, both of which it lacks at the present time:

- (a) a deep knowledge of the Indian culture and the dynamics within it, both historical and contemporary;
- (b) a deep grounding in the root understanding of Christ and His ministry through the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection.



As for the knowledge of Indian culture, the worst that has happened to us is a ~~loss~~ <sup>gap</sup> as a result of the western impact, is a total recession in all aspects of our traditional culture. We have, for example, in Kerala, lost our Chavithunatakams and our Parisamuttukali both indigenous art forms used for Christian cultural expression and for religious education of the masses. We have lost both our architecture and our iconography, our fascinating sculpture and our rich tradition of folk songs. We have slavishly <sup>and badly</sup> imitated Spanish <sup>or English</sup> styles for Church architecture and lately even worse styles; in painting we have been content to copy religiously decadent renaissance art in its more vulgar modern versions.

A few attempts are being made in the <sup>Roman</sup> Catholic and Protestant traditions to create a new style of music which is largely an imitation of certain contemporary Hindu styles which are themselves not the most creative or suited to worship even in the Hindu tradition. But in art and architecture, the churches are unable <sup>even</sup> to feel the need for an authentic Christian style embodying our own



deeper perceptions of reality.

The Senate of Serampore has to do some radical revision of its curriculum to include a course on "Culture and Christian Ethics Aesthetics"

which will deal with all aspects of culture ~~both~~ (a) theoretically, (b) <sup>historically</sup> and (c) in terms of critique of contemporary Indian culture. A course outline should be produced to include at least the following topics:

- (a) Christ, the Church and Culture - Some theological foundations
  - (b) Culture - its various meanings; ~~and~~ focus on culture as human creativity reshaping nature and in that process reshaping human consciousness and awareness.
  - (c) Culture - its various forms: art, <sup>myths, social custom</sup> architecture, poetry, music, literature, cinema, dance, drama, religious rites, festivals, sports, advertisements, pilgrimages; etc. Analysis of the contemporary scene: ~~and~~
  - (d) History of Christian art, architecture <sup>music, ~~and~~</sup> as well as criteria for Christian evaluation.
  - (e) The role of poetry and literature eval from a Christian point of view
- ... Dilemma in Cinema criticism and art and

- (g) Church Architecture - Salient principles and basic elements for today
- (h) Indian Church music and art - principles for creating today (Kathakali, Bharatanatyam)
- (i) The Drama, the Dance, and their role in Christian cultural formation
- (j) Folk festivals<sup>vals</sup> and Folk art in India today. Traditional forms; The patterns used by the Communist parties of India in their early days; the forms used by the Sastha Sahitya Parishad today.
- (k) The role of Culture in ~~the~~ social transformation, and in the conservation of valuable aspects of the heritage.
- (f) The role of myth, ritual and symbolism in relation to religious faith and experience.

One Course in a three-year B.D. Curriculum cannot do the job.

The Senate of Serampore must encourage cultural performances with Christian orientation in its Senate and Board meetings and Convocations and encourage affiliate colleges to compete in cultural creativity.

There should also be special seminars organized by the Senate for art, architecture, music, drama, literature

## Embodiment of Cultural Values

The embodiment of Christian value perceptions in culture can be undertaken only by the Christian people in each locality. But the ministers of the Church have a crucial role to play in kindling interest, providing orientation and taking initiatives. Attention should be paid to the construction of new buildings, the decoration and structuring of Chapel interiors and exteriors in seminaries and colleges and to the music and painting. It will be difficult in the beginning to move away from the inherited traditions, mostly imitations of the west, and that too not at the level of the best in Western culture.

As a quickening takes place in the Christian churches who have been driven into an anti-culture corner by the impact of the west, we may produce fresh embodiments, not only in personal creativity, but also as the expression of the total life of the church. Only thus can the church truly hope to be a leaven in the lump.

## Not Gospel and Culture

(P. Gregorios)

In the circles of the World Council of Churches, one hears often about the need to study in depth the relation between 'Gospel and Culture'. This is the usual Protestant temptation, to take two abstract realities like Gospel and Culture and try to relate them in a theological-sloganistic way. Prof. Richard Niebuhr, one of my revered mentors, once wrote a book about Christ and Culture; the defect of the book is that Christ is always seen as an abstract entity, and so one can readily speak of Christ over Culture, Christ against Culture and all that. What we should talk about, I feel, is the community of Christians (or the Church, if you please) on the one hand, and the community of human beings in which Christians participate on an equal footing with others who are not Christian, and how the two are culturally related to each other.

The second temptation is to get into that other bug-bear of the western church planted amidst non-western cultures - what people call 'indigenisation'. Literally it means making something 'native' or 'born inside the country', which is actually 'foreign' or exogenous (born outside). So people take up some particular aspect of the local culture, and make it a garment for what remains basically Protestant evangelicalism or Roman Catholic Papism.

In a country like India this has been tried at different times by different people. The classical paradigm is Roberto de Nobili, who was in India from 1606 - 1656, an Italian aristocrat disguised as an Indian Brahmin, to win the Brahmins. He may not have made much of a positive impact on the Brahmins whom he wanted to convert, but he is certainly remembered by some

Indian Christians. Abhishiktananda, the French Roman Catholic priest, a generation ago took formal Sannyas to be a missionary to the Hindus; so does the contemporary Benedictine English priest, Bede Griffiths in Santhivanam near Tiruchirappally. Such people make a great impression on

some Western Christians associated with them; but Hindus in general are neither moved or attracted. In fact many Hindus look upon these as part of the typical machination of western christianity with its compulsive manipulativeness and deceptivity in the service of its mission.

On the theological side there have been efforts by Brahmabhandav Upadhyaya, Chenchiah and Chakkarai to clothe western Catholic or Protestant theology in terminology borrowed from Hinduism in the hope that this will appeal to the Hindus. The results have been rather disappointing to the purveyors of these suspect stratagems. Indians resent the kind of paternalism behind these stratagems. They see western missionaries or their Indian surrogates underestimating Indian intelligence. They feel that if <sup>Indians</sup> ~~they~~ can understand western medicine, science/technology, art and music without <sup>these latter</sup> being disguised in Indian forms, they can also understand what the Church has to say about its faith without such patronising attempts to bring it "down" to the Indian level.

The new stratagem of inter-religious dialogue is also on that ground suspect among the followers of the major religions of the world. Those among them who participate in dialogue have been able both to learn from Christians and also to correct them on some of their pet prejudices and stereotypes. But the dialogue movement has more meaning as a symbol, as a recognition of the principle of the equality of all religions in status and prestige, and as a necessary step towards the unity of humanity which is so desperately needed today.

The question of culture is the question of how human beings give expression to certain qualities in their relationship to each other and to the rest of the created order. These values are not artificially added to the process of organized human productivity; <sup>they</sup> underlie both dimensions, human beings dealing with each other in their social relations, human beings interacting with the rest of the created order and creating <sup>ing</sup> symbols, values, rituals and forms in that process of inter-action. But there is a third level which interpenetrates the social and the scientific - technological - the dimension of meanings, value connotations, truth perceptions and expressions, which point to a transcendent dimension.

The Church must learn to look at all three levels of culture - the primary or the four layered productive level of agriculture, industry, services and information; the secondary or social level of political economy or power relations among human beings; and the third level of value/meaning connotation and indication. Quite often culture is seen as limited to the third area alone.

Our concern as a Christian Church should be about Culture at all three levels, and the values embodied in science/technology/production, political economy/human relations and cultural creativity/criticism at the meaning/value level. Christians cannot manipulate or dominate culture. They can do two things - (1) ~~not~~ manifest the weaknesses and strengths of current practice of culture at all three levels; and (2) create new patterns at all three levels which embody values and meanings which they regard as higher on a genuinely but modestly Christian Scale of assessment.

The issue if tackled as that between 'Gospel' and 'Culture' at the level of 'evangelisation' it will lead inevitably into the manipulative deceptive structures endemic to western christendom in its inbuilt drive for expansion and domination. On the other hand, if Culture is seen as the Meaning/Value dimension at all three levels, Christians may be able to make a genuine contribution, which need not be labelled as Christian, to the sum-total of human existence.

## Hind and Hellas

A Story of some Ancient Encounters  
And a question about tommorrow

(Paul Gregorios)

-----

The attempt in this paper is only to suggest that the cultures, civilisations and philosophies of India and Greece are not as independent of each other as many Indians and Greeks seem to assume. The suggestion here is that the kinship between the Indian and Greek peoples is both ancient and deep. Those who look upon the Greek culture as the matrix of Western Civilisation as also those who try to understand Indian Culture as of purely Eastern origin should do further exploration, to see to what extent the Greek civilisation had been shaped by Indian elements that came into contact with it, as well as how the classical cultural development of India at its best in the seven centuries from 330 B.C. to 350 A.D. had been triggered by contact with Greek civilisation and culture.

The paper has no pretensions to be scientific, though efforts have been made to err on the side of caution, and to be circumspect in all speculation. It may not agree with pre-conceived notions of a purely Eastern Culture in India and a purely Western Culture in Greece. Its intention is to provide fresh thought and to help see new relations. Not much in this paper is totally new. Most of it has already been known to scholars. These three aspects



are highlighted in order to encourage Indians and Greeks to take a greater interest in each other than they have been prone to do in the last few decades, especially in independent India and in post-war Greece.

Perhaps, it is also suggested here, a new cultural renaissance in India as well as in Greece might be helped by a recognition of our debts to each other and a willingness again to learn from each other.

My examination of the evidence here has to be cursory and not fully documented. Those of you who have time and access to the resources can check for yourself the evidence I allude to here. And I want to confine myself mainly to philosophical influences of Greece and India upon each other in a seven-century period, three-and-a-half centuries before Christ and three-and-a-half after. I shall refer to three broad areas:

1. Alexander and the City of Alexandria.
2. The Indo-Greek Kingdoms.
3. Buddha, Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus and the Christian Fathers.

This means of course I am largely omitting the very scanty but still illuminating evidence from Herodotus<sup>1</sup> who told tales of India to the Greeks in the 5th century B.C., and told them about Scylax of Caria, the Greek sailor who sailed down the Indus river and then across the Indian Ocean into the Red Sea at the end of the 6th century B.C. and the beginning of the 5th. Gore Vidal, the contemporary



American novelist, has made the figure of Scylax come alive in his historical novel Creation, where he speaks of imaginary meetings of Scylax with Buddha, Mahavira and Kon-Fu-Tse or Confucius. I am also largely omitting the story of Megasthenes the Ionian (ca 350-ca, 290 B.C.), Seleucus Nicator's ambassador to the Court of Chandra Gupta, Emperor of India in Pataliputra (modern Patna), who describes that Court and the geography and customs of India, including the course of the Ganges and the caste system of the Hindus.

A more significant element I am omitting is that ancient civilisation from which both Greece and India freely borrowed - The Civilisation of the "Near East" - Sumerians and Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians, Medes and Chaldeans, Hebrews and Aramaeans, Phoenicians and Iranians, as well as the Egyptians, the Hyksos and the Hittites, who brought so many new ideas to what was then the centre of the world. Both India and Greece have drunk deeply at these fountains of the Fertile Crescent, and our failure to acknowledge this can only be due to parochial arrogance compounded by ignorance, leading to false claims of racial purity and pretensions of purely independent development of culture and thought.

The North-Western part of India and the Eastern part of Greece (now Turkey) were once integral parts of this middle eastern civilisation. Where did Hesiod and the Orphics get their Cosmogonies? And did Thales and Anaximander weave their cosmogonies out of whole cloth? Do you think Pythagorus and Plato owed nothing to this once tremendously vital and creative middle eastern civilisation? Were Stoic philosophy and ethics independent of Babylonian Astrology and the Jewish Torah

as well as the Chaldean Oracles? Can you imagine a West - whether Greek or Barbarian, that did not become influenced by the Judaeo-Christian civilisation and the Semitic near-eastern elements in it?

It is even more difficult for Indians to acknowledge how much of the Near East we have in our history, in our culture, and even in our blood. The Sumerian and the Dravidian ethnic types are strikingly similar to each other. Where did the Indo-Aryans come from, and did they drink deeply from these Middle Eastern civilisations? Are not many Punjabis and Sindhis Turko-Iranians? Proper knowledge of Indian ethnology and of its implications for Indian self-understanding could in future cause creative revolutions in the conception of Indian identity, and also contribute to our national unity.

Once both Greeks and Indians recognize their common debt to the great Middle Eastern Civilisations, our own internal as well as external cultural relations would be fundamentally improved, I do believe. This is a very important point which I shall not seek to develop further here

#### Alexander and Alexandria

When Alexander the Macedonian fought the Persians at Arbela according to Arrian<sup>2</sup>, the Persian army had several contingents of Indian forces, part commanded by the Satrap of Bactria, and the other under the Satrap of Arachosia. The Sakas seemed to have been independent Indian allies of the Persians, and had another contingent of Indian forces with a few elephants. Not only north-west India, but also the whole of the north had come under Persian influence<sup>3</sup>.

But when Alexander and his Yavana armies moved into India, and the Persian cause was seen to be lost, many of the Indian chiefs changed sides and joined Alexander - e.g., Śaśigupta (Sisikottes) and the Raja of Takhasila (Taxila). It was an international army that marched into India under Alexander - Balkans and Thracians, Cretans and Macedonians, Bactrians and Nubians (Ethiopians). The war was bloody and brutal, though most Indian Kings had surrendered. Hundreds of thousands were massacred. A large Punjabi mercenary contingent, which had previously shifted from the Persian army to Alexander's side and had tried to escape at night, were all put to death by the Macedonians.

The British historian, E.R. Bevan of Oxford narrates the story of a group of Indians who grew vine and ivy and told Alexander that they were the direct descendants of Dionysus the God of the Vine who had gone conquering Asia, had come to India long before Alexander and had settled down in India in the mountain country.

Perhaps more appropriate for our topic is Alexander's encounter with the "naked ascetics" of India; it is difficult, from the Greek accounts, to assess the reaction of Alexander to these encounters.

One cannot be wrong however, in assuming that there were among the Greeks who accompanied Alexander, some who must have been deeply moved by the dramatic entry of Kalamos of Takhasila into the fire by which he had chosen to die. Alexander himself must have watched the pre-stoic but also super-stoic calm with which the man sat on the pyre, and how he remained totally immobile and unaffected as the flames consumed him alive<sup>5</sup>. If Strabo and Arrian both utilized Nearchos'

eyewitness account, many a Stoic philosopher must have read either the original accounts or Strabo's or Arrian's version of it, and found this dispassionate approach to pain and death deeply moving. It is this dispassionateness which Stoicism later sought to develop as its central tenet.

But what impact did Alexander's brief occupation of India (three to four years) make on the Indian nation? The British historian puts it this way :

"When the rest of the East, after the passage of phalanx and legion (of Alexander) 'plunged in thought again,' it was thought profoundly modified by the Greek school master who followed in the soldier's train. In India Hellenic rationalism would have come into contact with more elaborate home-grown systems of imaginative thought or intuition than the Near (er) East afforded. What would have happened we cannot say; but that the contact would have left either unaffected is highly improbable."<sup>8</sup>  
(emphasis added)

Arrian tells us that Alexander settled many Greek veterans in many of the Indian Alexandrias which he created<sup>9</sup>. Many Greeks as well as other nationalities in Alexander's armies settled in the Punjab, and,

if they did not return home in one or two generations, must have inter-married with Indians and imparted some Greek wisdom to their descendants. It is not so well known that during the very short period of Alexander's stay in India, he established European-Middle-Eastern settlements in many places in the Punjab, along the shores of the Jhelum, the Sutlej and the Beas, and called each little nucleus city Alexandria. The impact of these European-Middle-Eastern colonies must have had on the culture of North-West India remains a topic to be adequately researched. It seems important, not only for a more balanced self-understanding of our Indian identity, but also for ultimately resolving the tough problems that today face India in relation to the Punjab and Kashmir as well as Pakistan. Who among us Indians would have the courage to do an honest evaluation of the heritage of the North-West of India through the centuries, and to assess its impact on the development of Indian civilisation and culture?

On the African Alexandria as a place of meeting and interaction between the Indian and Greek cultures and philosophies, I shall be brief at this point, but later take up at some length one of these Alexandrian contacts which has special significance. Here I need to say that at least during the first three centuries of the Christian era, Alexandria had become the intellectual and cultural centre of the Hellenic civilisation. The Museum, with its library of half a million scrolls (incorporating the personal library of Aristotle himself), was the centre of scientific and philosophical research, with a hundred professors paid by the Ptolemaic king to teach every subject under the sun as well as above it. Some of the great teachers were Ctesibius and

Philo of Byzantium in mechanics and pneumatics, Herophilus and Erasistratus in anatomy and physiology, Euclid, Archimedes and Apollonius in geometry and mechanics, Aristarchus, Eratosthenes and Hipparchus in astronomy, just to mention a few. The Museum covered one-fourth of the area of the whole city of Alexandria.

Savants from every part of the world flocked to Alexandria. The Greeks themselves had begun to sail to India by the first century,<sup>11</sup> and several scholars from India also came, either by ship or by the land route, both Brahmins and Buddhists<sup>12</sup>. Clement of Alexandria (ca 150 A.D. to ca 214 A.D.) refers to the Buddha<sup>13</sup>. Brahmins are present in African Alexandria at least by the first century A.D.

The legend of Apollonius of Tyana (died ca 97 A.D.) by Philostratus<sup>14</sup> (died ca 225 A.D.), and the account of a philosophical debate between Greeks and Hindus (or Buddhists) in the first century should not be disregarded as mere romantic fiction. Christians have a special interest in discrediting the story of Apollonius, because Apollonius was built<sup>up</sup> by later legend and by anti-Christians as a Christ-like saintly figure to prove that saintliness was attainable outside Christianity. But Philostratus tells us that the first question the Greek philosophers put to the Hindu sages was whether "they knew themselves", which was the characteristic formulation of the goal of philosophy in Greek thought (Gnōthi Seauton). The Hindu reply was :

"If we know the All, then we must first know ourselves, but we could not have attained to true knowledge, had we ourselves had not been first known to ourselves."

Alexandria, Athens, Rome, and even Syrian Tyana were places where this kind of philosophical debate went on for centuries, and Greek thought itself, particularly neo-Pythagoreanism, neo-Platonism, and Stoicism were the products of this encounter.

Aristotle himself, the tutor of Alexander, had asked the latter to take some Greek philosophers to India, so that Indian philosophy would come to the West. The story is that an Indian philosopher had come to Greece already when Socrates, Aristotle's teacher was still living (Socrates died ca 399 B.C.)<sup>15</sup>. Plutarch (1st century A.D.) speaks of the Greek philosophers who accompanied Alexander and their discourses with Indian philosophers, with Alexander himself present and participating. One of these philosophers with Alexander in India was a nephew of Aristotle. Pyrrho went to India before 275 B.C. and was deeply affected by Indian philosophy. Onesikritos, the Cynic, also obviously accompanied Alexander.

Perhaps in the Alexandrias of India too the philosophical meeting between the two cultures went on for a long time. The Milinda Panha (or Questions of Menander) speaks of Sakala (Sialkot?), a city whose streets "resound with cries of welcome to teachers of every creed, and the city is the resort of the leading men of each of the different sects".<sup>16</sup>

## II. The Indo-Greek Kingdoms

The Greeks ruled over North-West India (over Punjab and Sind, Gandhara and Afghanistan) for some two eventful centuries. Demetrius (ca 180 - 165 B.C.), King of Bactria was probably the first such after

Alexander and the Seleucids. His military campaigns took him right up to Patna (Pataliputra) the capital of the Mauryan empire of Magadha. Our Indian purāṇas are full of stories of the "viciously valiant Greeks".<sup>17</sup>

It is again a line of research worth pursuing to explore the development of early Indian literature, including the epics of Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata, as well as the dramas of Aśvaghosha (2nd century A.D.), Bhāsa (4th century A.D.) and Kalidāsa (5th century A.D.). It is conceivable that drama was Greece's gift to Indian literary form. The Indo-Greek as well as the Indo-Parthian kingdoms regularly staged Greek plays. The dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes had been translated into the Prākṛit language and regularly staged, at least from the 2nd century B.C. Some would even see the inspiration for the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata in the Prākṛit translations of Homer's Odyssey and Iliad. There is a theory that the stage-curtain was introduced into India by the Greeks. It is still called Yavanika or that which belongs to the Greeks, in Sanskrit and in other contemporary Indian languages.

Menander, the son-in-law of Demetrius struck his coins with the inscription on one side in Greek and the other in Kharoshti - as did Aśoka. Some think that Menander the Greek King, embraced Buddhism. Anyway, these kings introduced Alexandrian or Greek astronomy and other sciences to India. Varāhamihira (mid 6th century A.D.) speaks of Greek astronomers still living in India in his time, and his Panchasiddhantika explicitly refers to Greek teachers and teachings (Yavanacharya, Yavaneswara, Yavanajataka, Yavanasiddhanta and so on).



Galen, Hippocrates and other Greek physicians were also known to Indians and the debt of Caraka and Susruta to Greek medicine is quite large.

The many Buddhist stupas and monasteries built by Emperor Kanishka in the second century A.D. were designed and constructed by a Greek Engineer, Agesilaus whom Kanishka employed. Gandhara art, to which Greeks and Romans lay equal claim, was developed and carried elsewhere in India by Buddhist monks. In fact it was the peculiarity of the Kanishka or Kushana empire that it provided a powerfully stimulating cultural milieu where Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Chinese cultures mingled and moulded each other. Classical Indian philosophical and literary developments could be traced to this impact.

I must leave here the Indo-Greek and Indo-Parthian kingdoms, leaving it to scholars with more time and more competence, to bring out the many ways in which the two cultures influenced and shaped each other

### III. India's Impact on Christianity

This third point is likely to be more controversial, because as yet not very well documented.

It is clear that the two most powerful elements in the shaping of classical Christian thought were Christian monasticism and the early (particularly 4th century) Christian Fathers.

The origins of Christian monasticism are still traced to the deserts of Egypt. But Antonine and Pachomian monasticism, especially

as it spread in Syria and Palestine, has an older ancestry. The influence of Buddhist monks and Chaldean mystics on the Jewish monasticism of the Qumran communities of the two centuries before and after Christ needs to be further studied. The legend of Barlaam and Joasaph, patently a Christianised Buddhist story, adapted from Indian Buddhist sources to glorify Christian monasticism, traditionally attributed to St. John of Damascus in the 8th century A.D., is only one of these indicators of Buddhist influence on early Christianity.<sup>18</sup> It is the story of Joasaph, the son of <sup>an</sup> Indian king, converted from Buddhism to Christianity. It is now well established that the story itself in its original form (without the conversion to Christianity part) is Buddhist.

Buddhist monks went all over the world, especially in the time of Indian Emperor Aśoka (269 B.C. - 232 B.C.), the great and brutal conqueror who became a pacifist and a Buddhist after the bloody conquest of Kalinga. Buddhism spread to Central Asia, to Tibet, Mongolia and China, as well as to the West. One of the Greek Kings of the Punjab, Menander or Milinda became Buddhist, and became patron of the great Buddhist philosopher-monk Nāgasēna. The Gandhara school of art, which is both Graeco-Roman and Indian-Buddhist, stands as a testimony to the great merging of Buddhist and Hellenic civilisations.

Soon Christianity itself came to India through Christ's Apostle St. Thomas, who made many converts both in the north-west which had been thoroughly hellenized by that time, and along the coast, all the way into the Coromandel Coast, present Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

It was about this time that the Greeks entered into the spice trade and began sailing frequently to India. Travel between India and Greece

became regular. Many Buddhists and Brahmins travelled to Rome and Alexandria. Prof. Emile Bréhier of the Sorbonne has suggested, in his book on the Philosophy of Plotinus the "Neo-Platonist", that the Indian element was a catalyst in the culture of Alexandria<sup>18</sup>, and gave rise to the mystical element in neo-platonism.<sup>19</sup> Victor Chapot, whom Bréhier cites, describes Alexandria, as "having seen constantly passing or dwelling a cosmopolitan cohort; the small bronzes and the miniature earthenware statues help us discern the very diverse ethnic types...Greeks, Italians, Syrians, Libyans, Cilicians, Ethiopians, Bactrians, Scythians, Indians, Persians..."<sup>20</sup>

Prof. Brehier's argument, more than half a century ago is interesting. Plotinus (205-270 A.D.), who taught in Alexandria and Rome, has two central<sup>leading</sup> ideas - (a) the intelligibility of the universe and the human mind's capacity to penetrate beyond appearance and to know reality in its undifferentiated oneness; and (b) the total union of beings with the Being of the One, overcoming all duality. It is this latter idea that the West has called 'mysticism'. Bréhier argues that it was contact with Indian thought which transformed the Socratic Pythagorean and Stoic notions of knowing the inner logos of the cosmos and the unity that stems from it, into the notion of a 'mystical union' of the All with the One. But he also says that it was

"in fact, ....through Plotinus that, directly or indirectly, hellenic ideas penetrated the West. It is therefore important to find out whether he has introduced, along with hellenism, currents of ideas of a different nature."<sup>21</sup>

What is the nature of this non-hellenic idea which Plotinus and neo-platonism introduced into the West, and which obviously influenced deeply Christian monks and Christian Fathers - whether Augustine of Hippo or Gregory of Nyssa? Plotinus formulates the idea this way :

"As one who approaches the All and does not remain apart, you would never say: 'I am such and such'; as one who has become the All, you have left all that you had come to be and all you first experienced. You were that which you were, only by adding something to what you really are; it was this addition that made you less than what you are; for this surplus does not come from Being, for nothing can be added to Being; what was added to Being was non-Being. Something of non-Being thus added, Being becomes less than Being, less than the All; this surplus you throw away and you become the All."<sup>22</sup>

Clearly this line of thinking has no antecedent in Hellenic or Egyptian thinking. It is pure Vedānta. The Ātma has only to shed its avidya to realize its identity with the paramātmā. And the failure to recognize the source of this idea in neo-platonism and in western mysticism in general seems to me difficult to justify. I can only attribute that failure to false pride.

But where did Plotinus get this idea? Did he have any direct contact with Indian thought? The answer to that question is provided by Plotinus' contemporary, classmate and biographer, the Syrian Porphyry. Porphyry, a strong anti-Christian, or possibly an ex-Christian, was a great admirer and devotee of Plotinus and wrote his biography.<sup>23</sup> The matter has been thoroughly researched by Prof. Willy Theiler<sup>24</sup> and others.

Young Plotinus, by the time he was 28, was thoroughly tired of the study of philosophy in Alexandria and Rome. By 232 A.D. he had moved from teacher to teacher, and was dis-satisfied, bored and even depressed. So Porphyry tells us. A friend later introduced him to a strange teacher, who refused to put anything in writing. This teacher Ammonius Saccas told his students very strictly not to discuss their philosophy with all and sundry. Ammonius shunned all publicity, and unlike other teachers forbade his students to advertise their professor. As soon as Plotinus listened to one 'lecture' by Ammonius Saccas, he said, according to Porphyry, "This is the one I was looking for."<sup>25</sup>

And who was this Ammonius Saccas who imparted mysteries and remained unknown? We know that he was the teacher of both Plotinus and Origen<sup>26</sup>. He may have been one of the professors employed by the Museum but he could also have been, more likely, a free-lance. The hypothesis was once put forth that he was a Buddhist monk, but this is quite impossible. He was almost certainly a Vedāntin, but not necessarily an Indian. The view that Ammonius was an ex-porter (Saccas = porter) from the docks of Alexandria is perhaps hostile and untrue. He may have been a son of Christian parents. His teachings, in spite of the proscription, were written down in Theodotus' Scolia of Ammonius and in Porphyry's

Miscellaneous Questions, but the reliability of these sources has been questioned.<sup>27</sup>

The one thing that Plotinus acquired from Ammonius was the idea of the union of the Many with the One, or the realisation of their given unity. The other was a great desire to go to India, which Porphyry in his life of Plotinus, directly attributes to Ammonius. There need be no question that Plotinus, who tried to go to India, got his Vedantic idea from Ammonius Saccas. Plotinus accompanied Roman Emperor Gordian (d. 243) on an expedition to Persia, specifically to acquaint himself with Indian and other Eastern ways of thinking. Before that he studied for 11 years under Ammonius Saccas. When he returned from Persia, without succeeding in his plans to go to India, he set up his own school in Rome in 244 A.D. What we today call western mysticism has thus its major source in the Upaniṣads and in Hindu teachers who came West. Plotinus saw Contemplation (Indian dhyāna) rather than rational thought as the true way to wisdom and realisation. Let me cite part of the entry on Plotinus in the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (ed. F.L.Cross; London, 1958) :

"Contemplation which occupies a central position in Plotinus' system, is the most perfect activity, for by it Souls can attain union with God. In order to reach this its last end the Soul has to prepare itself by purity of heart and ascetical practices, turning away from all sensible things. It must devote itself to recollection, in which memory, sensibility and discursive reasoning

progressively disappear, until it reaches a state in which it 'feels' an ineffable Presence in an ecstasy of 'joyous stupor' and blissful plenitude. The chief difference between this so-called 'natural mysticism' and that of the Orthodox Christian mystics is that, in Plotinus' system, union is reached by the unaided effort of the soul, whereas in Catholic teaching it is the work of Divine grace. Despite this fundamental difference Plotinus seems to have exercised indirectly much influence on Christian thought, especially on St. Augustine and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, and through them, on theologians and mystics of the Middle Ages."28

Christianity, Latin, Greek or Anglo-Saxon, has been largely unwilling to acknowledge its debt to the East, particularly to Persia and India. Some scholars recognize its debt to the middle eastern civilisation of antiquity; but most Christians discount the impact of Akkadia, Sumeria, Babylon, Assyria, Persia and Egypt on the milieu in which Christianity originally arose and spread. It is much more difficult, for scholar and layman alike, to recognise that the central element in Christianity, namely our union with Christ and through him with God, is not a Greek idea or a Semitic notion, but clearly an Indian idea. Strong prejudices stand in the way of that recognition. Once it is recognized, one can also recognise the general principle of the interconnectedness and mutual impact of all cultures and religions. I do believe that the high intellectual quality of classical Indian thought, right up to Sankara in the eighth century, owes something to the invasion of Alexander and the Greek influences in India which continued for several centuries. I do also believe that the Christian teaching about the believer's union with Christ is not independent of the influence of Indian perceptions, coming through the middle eastern civilisation and later through neo-platonism. St. Paul himself, trained by Rabbis but open to the ~~secular currents~~ in his university town of Tarsus, was not free from these influences. I would even argue that the Lord Jesus, whose human mind was shaped by both the Hebrew Scriptures and by the ritual-mystical monasticism of the Qumran communities, was not totally free from these Indian influences which had long before his time penetrated Judaism and the near eastern civilisation. I would further argue <sup>that</sup> Catholic and Protestant traditions of the West in so far as they follow the Augustinian tradition, have to acknowledge their debt to neo-platonism and to India. The living tradition of mysticism has had such a decisive role in ~~x~~ the shaping of the west. And I have argued that the basic insight in mysticism is a contribution from India. The Plotinian tradition, and the Indian element which lies behind it,



can be detected in the mysticism of the Spanish, Germanic, and Low countries type, as well as in the Greek hesychast tradition. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Boehme, Eckhart and Tauler, St. Bernard and St. Francis, Bonaventure Catherine of Siena, Ruysbroeck and Gerhard Groote, Fenelon and Suso, Thomas a Kempis and Julian of Norwich, owe much to the Indian mystical tradition. German pietism of the Catholic and Protestant varieties contain strong Indian elements. Whether the origin of Hesychasm on Mt. Athos is traced to Christianity in Egypt and Syria or to Sufism in Persia does not matter much. Persian Sufism itself is itself one of the later forms of Indo-Iranian mysticism, which, before Islam, was first Zoroastrian and then Christian.

The more profound Christian fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries, came to grips with this Indian element in neo-platonism. Each transformed it in different ways. Augustine of Hippo probably made fewer changes in it than Pseudo-Dionysius. Arianism came out of Neoplatonist philosophy and Jewish monotheism, and in dealing with it, all the classical Christian fathers came into dynamic contact with this Indian mysticism.

### Conclusion

Acknowledging debts is only a preliminary to entering into honest and creative new relations. We can not repay these debts to each other. Nor should we feel humiliated in recognising what we owe to others. Once we recognize our debts, however, we should be freer to enter into new relations <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ assume new attitudes. Today we need each other, because all parts of humanity have today become mutually interdependent. New attitudes and new relations alone can lead us ~~x~~ to a new world where Peace with Justice dwells, and all human beings can live together as one family with wisdom and dignity.

## Notes

1. Herodotus (ca 484 B.C. to ca 420 B.C.), Works, ed by A.D. Godley, Loeb Classics 4 vols, 1920-24. See especially the Persian Wars (Eng. Tr. Aubrey de Selinant, Penguin, 1954).
2. Anabasis III 8:3-6, "The Zoroastrian Period of Indian History".
3. See the argument of Dr. D.B. Spooner: "The Zoroastrian Period of Indian History" in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1915) (pp 63-89, 405-455), and criticism by V.A. Smith, JRAS, 1915 pp 800-802, by Keith, JRAS 1916, pp 138-143, and by Thomas, JRAS, 1916 pp 362-366.
4. Cambridge History of India, Vol.I, Second Indian Reprint, 1962 p.3'
5. Arrian : VII : 3.
6. Strabo XV : 717.
7. One by Nearchos who commanded Alexander's navy and the other by Onesicritus who was pilot of Alexander's ship. Pliny and later writers also used these accounts.
8. E.R. Bevan in Cambridge History of India, Vol.I, Indian edition 1961 p 345.
9. Arrian V : 27:5.
10. T.R. Glover, The Ancient World, Pelican, 1944, p 186.
11. The ships navigated the Red Sea and use the monsoons to cross the Arabian sea.

12. The taboo against ocean travel came much later.
13. Stromateis I : 15. He uses the Pali spelling Boutta.
14. Text in Vita Apollinii in the Loeb Classical Library, ed by F.C. Conybeare, 2 vols, 1912; Eng Tr. J.S. Phillimore, 2 vols 1912.
15. Fragment of Aristoxenos of Tarent. See Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica XI:3:28.
16. Cited in B.S. Upadhyaya, Feeders of Indian Culture, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, p 49.
17. See Yuga Purana in Gargi Samhita.
18. Text in Patrologia Graeca (Migne) xcvi : 857-1250. Text with Eng. Tr. in Loeb Classics, 1914.
19. Emile Brehier, La Philosophie de Plotin, Paris 1928, intro. pp. xviii-xix.
20. Victor Chapot, Le Monde Romain, Paris, 1927.
21. Brehier, op.cit. p.109. English Tr. by present writer.
22. Plotinus, Enneads, VI : 5.12. Free translation by present writer. Brehier's edition vol VI, p.212, line 16 ff.
23. Vita Plotinii (Peri Plotirou Biou) in E. Brehier (ed), Plotin, Enneades Vol I. Eng.Tr. in S. MacKenna, Enneads, 5 vols, London, 1917-30.

24. Willy Theiler, Forschungen zum Neoplatonismus : Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie, Band X, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1966.
25. "touton ezetoun". See Brehier Vol I, p.3.
26. See Rene Cadiou, Introduction au Systeme d'Origene, Paris, 1932 and La jeunesse d'Origene, Paris, 1935, pp 184 ff.
27. For further discussion of Ammonius Saccas, see F. Heinemann, Ammonius Sakkas und der Ursprung des Neuplatonismus, Hermes LXI (1926); Dehaut, Essai historique sur la vie et la doctrine d'Ammonius Saccas, Bruxelles, 1836; and H. Crouzel, Origene et Plotin, eleves d'Ammonios Saccas, in Bulletin de Litterature Ecclesiastique, 1956, pp 193 ff; also Willy Theiler, op cit.
- By way of sources, Nemesius, de natura herminis may be consulted - PG 40 : 567B, 593B.
28. op cit. sub vocum Plotinus, p. 1085.

dunkle Raum

# Can Philosophy ~~Some~~ Create Culture

(Paul Gregorios)

"Philosophy is the architecture of culture". These words of Professor Janusz Kuczynski at the Sanhniketan meeting (1976) of the International Society of Metaphysics, are worth heeding and examination.

Philosophy, according to him, not only creates the design for civilization, but should also lay the foundation and even erect the superstructure of culture. Prof. Kuczynski documents this by citing the instances of the great synthetic or architectonic systems of Augustine and Descartes, Hegel and Marx.

It is clear that Augustine and Descartes did not set out to create cultures or civilizations, ~~but~~ Their systems and methods have no doubt had pervasive influence on the rise of western culture. In the case of Hegel, while it is true that he became the philosopher of the Prussian state, it is not the case, <sup>however,</sup> that Hegelianism created the civilization of the Germanic peoples. The contrary would be more true - that Germanic

---

The words Civilization and Culture are used somewhat interchangeably at this point. We may need to make some clear distinctions between the two later on.

Culture gave rise to the system of Hegel.  
 Hegel is of course <sup>marks</sup> a watershed. No philosopher in the west could write for quite some time after him without dealing with his thought either pro or con. ~~In a sense~~ Hegel's own summary of his system: "the real is rational and the rational is real" in a sense had become <sup>almost</sup> axiomatic in <sup>the</sup> western intellectual tradition ~~for quite some time~~ until lately. Less acceptable even in the Germanic tradition is his other dictum "Spirit is all and all is spirit". Even more influential was Hegel's methodological principle of the dialectic between thesis, antithesis and synthesis. <sup>X<sup>2</sup></sup> At least half the world's population is today significantly shaped and moulded by this methodological principle applied to social evolution in Marxist thought. In this sense one could say that Hegel was the architect of a civilization, but this is indeed a very partial sense.

Marx himself is the great example of what Professor ~~Kuczynski~~ Kuczynski conceives as the role of true philosophy. ~~But here too~~ One <sup>sees clearly</sup> ~~must confess~~ that the Marx-Engels team had laid the ~~for~~ philosophical economic foundations <sup>understanding and</sup> civilization, a way of <sup>organizing</sup> ~~social~~ <sup>this philosophy</sup>

X<sup>2</sup> But even this was not so clearly formulated by Hegel as some people think. It was Engels and Plechanov that made the dialectical principle fully clear.



theoretically determined the ~~structure~~  
of socialist societies, and built up their  
sub-structure or ~~Unterbau~~ Unterbau of the  
relations of production and the Ueberbau or  
super-structure of culture ~~generated~~ built on the  
foundation of the relations of production.

Now when <sup>one</sup> looks at non-socialist,  
i.e. Capitalist or feudal societies, one does not  
see any articulate philosophy which, <sup>either</sup> provided  
~~either~~ the blueprint of culture or helped build  
the substructure of economic relations or the  
super-structure of culture. Pragmatism, the  
American philosophy of Charles Peirce, William  
James, John Dewey and Ferdinand Schiller,  
~~could perhaps be examined as a possible~~  
comes closest to such a role. Peirce  
was clear that truth was basically  
operational and functional. An object of our  
conception is not to be understood in terms  
of its 'substance' and 'accidents', but rather  
in terms of its operational effects. Truth is,  
as in Hegel, what happens to an idea in the  
evolutionary process. But just as Marx  
threw Hegel on his head, the Pragmatists  
took Hegel out of the class-room to the work-bench.  
One can say that, to a large extent,  
the pervasively influential "American Civilization"

- 4 -

Given a blue-print by the Pragmatists.  
But it is interesting to note, in ~~this~~ <sup>the</sup> Bicentennial  
<sup>1976, that</sup> Year, the Americans did not talk very much  
about the philosophers who shaped their culture  
and powered their civilization. It is because,  
in the case of American civilization, it was  
a more popular philosophy that provided the  
blue-print as well as the power to build the  
structure, and when that popular philosophy  
is dressed up in fashionable scholarly  
language such as that of Peirce and James,  
the people can hardly recognize the thing as  
their own?

This brief examination of the  
Concept of philosophy as providing the  
architectural plan and helping build the  
sub-structure and super-structure of civilization  
leads to some tentative conclusions:

- ① The Concept is in fact applicable  
to but very few philosophies. In fact, it  
seems <sup>Marxism</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>Pragmatism</sup> <sup>Capitalism</sup>  
seem to be <sup>almost</sup> the only two ~~exceptions~~ cases  
in which the Concept has some validity.  
If one examines the philosophical  
systems as Berkeley or Hume,

Spinoza or Bergson, Leibniz or Spinoza, they do not seem to have had much architectonic influence on the shaping of culture. There are systems which have had more influence - like those of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, but was it not because these philosophies became convenient expressions of the aspirations of the people, which they only helped to reinforce and reinvigorate?

- (2) If one takes non-western systems of philosophy into account, the civilizational or even social aspect is hardly to the fore, except in the Confucian and certain Indian systems. Oriental thought is a quest for realization, for personal truth, for the life that overcomes death and decay as well as birth and re-birth, for an enduring reality beyond the relative truth of history and civilization. This preoccupation in the west, ~~where~~ as in Voltaire, ~~sought to~~ know "the steps by which men passed from Barbarism to civilization", was not characteristic

most other civilizations. Was there any articulate philosophy which created the Indo-Aryan, or <sup>ancient Chinese</sup> ~~Chinese~~, or Egyptian or Assyrian or Sumerian or Akkadian or Maya or Inca civilizations? Is it not more the case <sup>that</sup> whatever views the people had were held in myth and symbol, in ritual and saga, rather than in any articulate philosophy?

x

x

x

We are today seeing, as a consequence again of the dialectic process in history, a certain synthesis between Marxist ideology and ~~social~~ socio-economic pragmatism. But this is not to say that the contradictions between the two have been resolved. The pluralism that today begins to flourish within the Marxist ideological camp itself bids fair to attract more and more elements of pragmatism into it. No ideology can long remain alive if it is unaffected by historical experience.

And yet the question is slowly coming to the surface as to whether there has to be a reappropriation of what is of real value in Marx and Engels, both in

of their understanding of <sup>the needs of</sup> socio-historic  
ality and in terms of their anticipation  
of the goal to be achieved and the steps leading  
to that goal. Such a reappropriation in  
the light of four generations of historical experience  
and of ~~half~~ a dozen or more successful ~~first~~  
<sup>existing degrees)</sup> ~~first~~ social revolutions (~~have~~ <sup>as well as in the light of</sup> and the problems  
encountered <sup>today</sup> by these socialist societies, could still  
remain faithful to the basic tenets of Marxism-  
Leninism.

There are others, and I am  
not referring <sup>only</sup> to the renegades like Lukacs, Lichtheim,  
or Garaudy, who feel that the very philosophical  
conception in the ideology needs a revision,  
particularly with reference to the role of reason,  
and to the relation between ~~humanity~~ and  
the ~~rest of~~ 'nature' appearance and reality. One  
could take into ~~its reason~~ ~~the role~~ ~~arbitrarily~~ account  
the philosophical critiques of Horkheimer and Lukacs  
and ask the question whether reason has a role other  
than the technical, whether it is entirely determined  
by the laws of the dialectic and the relations of production,  
or whether there is a constructive reason which makes  
decisions in the light of intuitions other than the  
deliverances of technical reason.

The weakest link in traditional Marxist  
metaphysics is still the relation between reality and  
sense-data. The 'copy' theory can hardly function today.

- o -

Epistemological question in Marxism is a point of great interest to non-Marxists like the present writer who agree with the judgment of the American Loren Graham that "in terms of universality and degree of development, the dialectical materialist explanation of nature has no competitors among modern systems of thought." <sup>3</sup> Lenin himself in his Materialism and Empirio-criticism <sup>4</sup> recognizes the role of fantasy in human perception, and even in the 'strictest science'. Philosophic choice is ~~not~~ often a matter of imagination and intuition rather than of a demonstrable scientific conclusion. Science, as well as philosophy, are tools created by the human mind to come to terms with historical reality. Once the element of ~~fantasy~~ fantasy or imagination is recognized, one can see that human values to be embodied in a civilization are not a matter of scientific demonstration, but of philosophic choice.

It is at that point that the possibility arises to go beyond the sterile debate between Structuralists and Marxists in France today about the question of whether Marxism is ideology or science. All science is necessarily ideological in its foundations. Even pragmatism is an ideology.

<sup>3</sup> L.R. Graham,

<sup>4</sup> Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union,

Vintage Books, New York, 1974. p. 430

<sup>5</sup> Howard ~~Johnson~~ and Harry Markels (ed) Reader in Marxist

which springs out of value-choices that are not strictly scientific.

There are not too many alternatives available today when it comes to changing society or creating culture. Within a Marxist frame of <sup>economic and</sup> social analysis, there are still possibilities for a large section of world intellectuals to find common ground and common orientations for society and civilization. But such common ground must include the possibility of epistemological self-criticism.

Not all philosophies can create a culture. Marxism does create culture. Perhaps the ideology of greed and acquisition powered by science and technology in a metaphysical frame of pragmatism can also create culture. The crux of the debate is in the value-system embodied in a culture. And the debate between Marxism and Pragmatism can be of decisive importance to the future of humanity.

## RELIGION IS THE MATRIX OF CULTURE

### Reflections on the Inculturation of Christianity


Paulos Mar Gregorios

It seems necessary first to recognize that not only the word "culture" in the corporate sense in which we use it today, but even the very concept is of late 18th century origin, not merely in the English language, but also in other languages of East and West. "Kultur" in German, meaning at that time refinement in the human person produced by education and training in the arts and sciences, according to Moses Mendelssohn, the German Jewish philosopher who was a contemporary of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), was a neologism in the German language in his time, and that too used only by the elite.

Even as late as 1948, T S Eliot did not dare define culture, but only wrote Notes Towards the Definition of Culture. And in 1971 George Steiner wrote his In Bluebeard's Castle: Notes towards the Redefinition of Culture. Both Eliot and Steiner, among the great minds of our century, could only grope for a definition of culture and provide some notes for it, but not say the final word as to what it is.

In fact the word is notoriously difficult to define, even to this day. In 1952 there was an attempt to bring together the various divergent meanings and definitions in various disciplines in Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions



 Papers of Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. 47). It is one thing for an archaeologist, another for an anthropologist, yet something else for the sociologist.

In archaeology Culture means that aspect of social behaviour as can be reconstructed from the archaeological record, which means mostly the material culture left by a society, hardly a reliable guide to the essentials of a culture.

In anthropology, culture is what men and women create out of nature for themselves and transmit to posterity. Culture is regarded as the particular historical realization of the human potential by a given society at a given time. Usually the anthropologist shies away from defining contemporary industrial-urban culture, but prefers to make studies of pre-industrial or "primitive" societies and cultures which still survive.

Culture comes from the Latin root "cultus" which can mean cultivation as in agriculture or horticulture or pisciculture; it can also mean training, discipline, mental culture, civilisation, refinement. It is also used for the honouring, adoration and worship of God or gods. The basic root of both culture and cultus or cult is colo which means to tend, to care for, to refine, to cultivate, to venerate, to worship.

It was in that sense that the Germans first used the word Kultur. Education and culture - Bildung und Kultur were the means to qualify for entry into the ruling class - the bourgeoisie of the Industrial Civilisation. In the Feudal system, aristocratic birth was the ticket of entry into the ruling class. In the industrial-capitalist system it was education and culture that lift you into the upper echelons. Today of course neither

education nor culture is necessary for entry into the ruling class. Sheer money power and muscle power (including goonda power or god-man power) can give one entrance.

But today when we speak of "Gospel and Culture" or "Christ and Culture", we do not mean that refinement which makes one a cultivated or cultured person. We mean more or less what the anthropologists and sociologists mean: the corporate social heritage of a community - the total body of material and spiritual artifacts produced and used by a community: systems of symbols, ideas, rituals, beliefs, aesthetic perceptions and expressions including art, music, dance, poetry and literature, distinctive forms of behaviour and social exchange, modes of family and social organization, mores and ethical norms, institutions of political and economic organisation and so on. Let us, for the time being, keep in mind that distinction between personal culture and corporate culture.

If personal "culture" as education and refinement was once the entrance ticket to the ruling class, corporate culture meant something entirely different - even the unrefined could be part of corporate culture. But do you think we had a word, for example, in Sanskrit, for either concept of culture? As far as I know, the answer is no at least for corporate culture, until we come to the modern period when our thinking is in western categories and we began to create words for concepts that do not exist in our "culture". Neither samskara nor samskr̥ti had either of these meanings until very recently.

Traditionally, the samskrit root samskr has a meaning parallel to Latin colo and cultus: to adorn, to grace, to refine, to polish, as the very name of the language is samskrta or a refined language of the elite, as opposed to prakrta or unrefined local vernaculars of the common people. Samskara was generally used in a cultic-ritual sense, namely to consecrate by the chanting of mantras, to purify a person by scriptural ceremonies, to consecrate, to sanctify. Derivatively it came to mean, as in the Latin, to refine, to polish, to educate. But its original meaning is a sacred rite: Manu mentions 12 such samskaras, others speak of 16 purificatory rites, including upanayana or the sacred thread ceremony. In this sense we speak in Malayalam of savasamskara. In our culture the word samskara even in the personal sense has a religious connotation.

But we do not find in Sanskrit the word samskara used for the corporate culture of the sociologists and the anthropologists. In Malayalam too the use of the word samskara for culture in a corporate sense, is a neologism, introduced when we adopted the western category structure.

For the sake of discourse we will accept this new western category of "culture" as a word for the corporate human heritage of a particular people, their way of life and thought and worship and artistic creativity, though such usage has many problems. The UNESCO once had a slogan: Technology is by nature universal; culture is by nature local. We know today that neither part of that statement is true. Culture always goes beyond the locality unless the boundaries of the locality are closed. And

technology cannot be the same everywhere.

## II. CHRIST AND CULTURE

When I saw my revered teacher Richard Niebuhr's book Christ and Culture, I was glad he did not make the mistake of talking about Gospel and Culture as the World Council of Churches does. The WCC title comes from a mistaken Barthian category structure - the Gospel as something which comes from God, while culture is a human creation. Unfortunately I do not know any expression of the Gospel which is not culture-bound. Of course it may be the culture of the Old Testament, or Palestinian Jewish culture, but a pure Gospel without human language and expression does not exist. Even the angel speaks to Mary in human language and human categories. There is no Gospel totally free from culture. Unfortunately Niebuhr also makes the same mistake when he says: "Christianity, whether defined as Church, creed, ethics or movement of thought, itself moves between the poles of Christ and Culture". It is this polarity between Christ and Culture, as if they were opposites, that I cannot accept.

If you are speaking of Christ to mean the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, then He is very much a cultural entity. He could not have become incarnate without participating in human culture of a particular time and place.

Bangkok 1972 also fell into the same error when it said: Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ." The mistake is in not recognizing that the Voice of

Christ also speaks to us through a specific culture. Christ was incarnate within the Palestinian Jewish culture, though in his formation as a human being, many other cultures may have made their contribution. The point is that Christ himself is not independent of culture. If we speak of Christ and Culture, we must recognize the role of culture also in the formation of the humanity of Christ. We should take into account the culture in which Christ was formed, the culture of those who transmit what they regard to be the message of Christ, and the culture of those who respond to that message.

Let us take a quick look at the three waves in which Christianity was brought to India. In the first wave it is a Palestinian Jew, St. Thomas the Apostle, who brings the message of Christ to us. We can presume that St. Thomas came from the same culture as Jesus Christ. This is not the case with the two later waves - the Spanish-Portuguese-Latin, and the European-American. The message was brought wrapped in a culture different from the Palestinian Jewish culture of Jesus Christ. In the first wave there was a conflict between the responding community's culture and the Palestinian Jewish culture of the Message and the Messenger. In the second and third waves the conflict is three-cornered: Palestinian Jewish Culture, Western Culture and Indian Culture. The bearers of the Gospel had already lost touch, not only with the original Palestinian Jewish culture, but also with the Graeco-Syrian culture in which the Christian Church first formulated its own life and mind.

There is of course a conflict between the Palestinian Jewish culture and the Indian culture. Resolving that conflict

took the Indian Church several hundreds of years, but it did resolve it **and** create a way of life and worship which integrated the two cultures. Was Christ obscured in the process?

Today Indian Christianity is an odd amalgam, heavily dependent on western culture for ideas and methods of approach, incompetent or unwilling to make contact with the Palestinian or Graeco-Syrian culture within which Christianity originally took form, and very uncertain or uninstructed about the true nature of our own Indian cultural heritage.

### III RELIGION AND CULTURE

Strangely enough, "Religion" too is a neologism with a meaning it did not have in pre-Enlightenment cultures. If Barth and Kraemer held that Religion was a human creation and the enemy of the Gospel, which was obviously a divine creation without any human admixture, I say that Religion in its present sense is also a creation of the European Enlightenment.

In its original sense, religion, though the word itself in that sense did not exist, was the all-pervasive framework and uniting centre of all thought and action - not a department of life specifically for dealing with God and so on. When the European Enlightenment wanted to enthrone Human Reason in place of Religion as the Supreme authority, the uniting centre and the framework concept, it had to banish something called religion from the centre of the public life to its margins; there in those

margins the present notion of religion took shape - as a particular religion like Protestantism or Roman Catholicism, and later on as world religions. While the mainstream and public life was to be based on science and human rationality, without any influence from God or God-based or Transcendent-oriented perspectives, such perspectives could survive on the margins - optional, private, individualistic religion, separated from all the important aspects of human life like political institutions, socio-economic systems, the powerful mass communication systems, from healing and health care, from education and the Academy. This strange hybrid, artificial, creation of the Enlightenment, which took shape and grew up in the dark outer margins of public life in the last couple of centuries, is what we call religion or religions today.

Even though there are cases of individual conversion in the New Testament, the Gospel is generally addressed to a community; part of that community responds positively, while the other part rejects the Gospel. The culture of the positively responding part is transformed by the Gospel and the Church that takes root in the culture. Old symbols, beliefs, rituals, standards are abandoned and new ones put in their place. The Seed of the Word of God thus takes root not merely in the hearts of individual believers, but in the new community of the Spirit.

The new culture that is created by the Gospel and the Church is not totally discontinuous with the old, though radically different from it in important ways. A people's clothing styles, eating habits, etc., may or may not change; they need not change, unless such change is necessary to create a new identity

for the believing community, recognizable from the outside. The most important cultural change is in the vision that guides everything else, in a new understanding of what God is doing and a fresh commitment to be involved in that process. Other changes follow: in community organisation and structures of authority and decision making; in rituals and forms of worship; in all human relations - parents-children, employer-employee, husbands-wives; in occupational choices, in the wise use of time; in the use of common and private resources for the service of others; in compassion and care for the oppressed, the down-trodden and the victims of injustice; in hospitality, especially to the stranger; in caring for the sick, for the aged and the infirm, for orphans and widows, and for whoever is in need. And so on.

The gospel or the Church does not create a brand new culture, but it takes the old and transforms it in radical ways. It is in this sense that we can see that Religion is the matrix of culture. The new culture is born again from the womb of the faith of the Church.

What about the old culture? It too was born in the womb of an earlier religious perception, in which maybe pagan gods set the norms for the people. In human history, every culture or civilisation, except the totally God-denying civilisation of the European Enlightenment in which we live today, was born in the matrix of some religion or other and shaped by its beliefs and perceptions.



The Christian faith, in an effort to survive in the midst of this Godless, Transcendent-denying, authority-defying civilisation which enthroned human rationality in place of God, has sought to do so by making cultural adjustments.

Both Liberalism and Fundamentalism are movements of adjustment with the modern rationalist paganism. Liberalism accepts its basic premise of the finality of human reason as supreme authority and is willing to jettison what in its heritage does not fit with that rationality; Fundamentalism tries to fly in the face of the culture of rationality by irrationally affirming some dogmas which they regard as more authoritative than any claims of the new rationality - infallibility of the Bible, its verbal inspiration, the substitutionary theory of the Atonement, the total sinfulness of all human beings, and so on.

Always in the past the Christian faith came to a culture born in a religious matrix and shaped by it. After the European Enlightenment, the Christian faith confronts a secular culture which not only claims to be totally independent of religion, but also regards other than European cultures as primitive and infantile, without even making much of an effort to examine them closely.

## |√ TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

On the one hand the Christian Faith confronts a secular culture of affirming the human being as Supreme, owing nothing to anything superior - a powerfully pervasive culture which operates

through our educational system, our health care approach, our political institutions, our economic systems and our mass communication systems. All these systems are supposed to be exclusively governed by human rationality and recognizes no authority above human beings.

On the other hand we face the religious cultures of the world, born in the matrix of world religions, refusing to be wiped out either by Christian missionary aggression, or even by secularisation. All religions want to resist that missionary aggression. For those who work to bring harmony and mutual understanding among the religions, the fear of Christian missionary aggression and inherent suspicion of Christian slyness on the part of other religions remains a major obstacle to open dialogue.

In fact one of the major contributing causes to the Renaissance of World Religions in the 1st century or so is precisely this reaction against missionary arrogance and aggression. The wounds inflicted by that cultural arrogance go very deep in most world religious cultures - as was expressed a hundred years ago by Swami Vivekananda and today less charitably by writers like Arun Shourie.

The cultural arrogance that was pervasive in both the second and third waves of missionary expansion, i.e. of the Latin Christians in the 16th and succeeding centuries, and the North European and American Christians in the 18th century until this day, has practically foreclosed the possibility of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists ever becoming Christians, at least en masse.

This does not mean that the World Religions have not been profoundly influenced by the Christian Teaching and Social practices. In that sense there is no world religion which as a whole has not been influenced by the teachings of Christ and thus to a certain extent "evangelised".

But the damage done by cultural arrogance in aggressive evangelism remains fairly irreparable. If we now start a new evangelism which is less culturally arrogant, and more open to other cultures, the distrust and suspicion built up in the last five hundred years will not be easily removed.

God has now brought us into a world where the world cultures born in and shaped by world religions will have to remain in a global community of mutual respect and informed mutual understanding. As Vivekananda pointed out more than a hundred years ago, no religion, including the modern religion of Secularism, can hope to displace all the other religions and have a monopoly of the loyalty of humanity. Christian theology has to take account of this insight, and formulate their understanding of God's purpose in the world accordingly.

In India today our task is fourfold:

- a. first to become better acquainted at depth with original Palestinian-Syrian Jewish-Syriac-Greek Christianity; this original form of Christianity is culturally much closer to our own Indian heritage than the western version in which Christianity has been imported into India in the last half millennium.
- b. shed all cultural arrogance imbibed from western Christianity, which is very much alien to the Gospel and the Christian

faith.

c. become more deeply acquainted with the Indian heritage of which Hinduism is only part; we must learn also from Buddhism and Jainism, but also from the other religions which have come in or developed later including Islam and Sikhism. Perhaps a better acquaintance with Sufism may be one way in which we can see how a Middle Eastern Religion like Islam shaped itself in the matrix of Indian culture. Our pre-Vedic, pre-Buddhist, pre-Jain Adivasi culture and Samkhya/Yoga systems of life, reflection and practice should by no means be neglected, since these two cultures, both Adivasi culture and Samkhya-Yoga way of life, born in a religious matrix, form the foundations of the Indian heritage. Samkhya-Yoga, later bifurcated into two systems, is reflected in all three traditions - Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. Adivasi culture is deeply ingrained in our blood and bones, as we experience while facing up to the environmental problem created by the industrial culture.

d. The end result must be the gradual formation of a truly Christian culture, not secular, but cosmopolitan, with openness to all world cultures, and passionately concerned about the welfare of the whole of humanity.

## CAN SCIENCE RECREATE CULTURE ?

(Paul Gregorios)

In this birth centenary year of Jawaharlal Nehru, let me add my own humble tribute to a great statesman and world leader, whose policies have played a major role in the shaping the development of both culture and science in India in the last forty years.

As Arnold Taynbee said about Nehru, he "served his fellow-men most fruitfully and most characteristically by taking his place in a series of interpretors and mediators between the civilisation of the West and other living civilisations".<sup>1</sup> It is that task of mediation and interpretation that has to continue through seminars like the present one. My present paper on Science and Culture is offered as foot-note to that ongoing mediation.

---

1. A. B. Shah, ed. Jawaharlal Nehru, A Critical Tribute,  
Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965 P-31.

## 1. Clarifying Concepts

Both words, 'Culture' and 'Science' are used in so many different senses and with so much ambiguity that frustration faces attempts at definition. Let us begin by noting that both 'Culture' and 'Science' are abstract words. We need to bring them to some kind of less abstract, phenomenal base before we can begin to understand either term.

Attempts at defining culture have been numerous in the past. One readily calls to mind T. S. Eliot's Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948) and George Steiner's Bluebeard's Castle: Notes towards the Redefinition of Culture (1971). Between these two appeared the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology Publication (Vol. 41, 1, 1952) entitled Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions. The Judgement of Raymond Williams remains valid: "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language".<sup>2</sup>

What makes me worried is that ~~that~~ the classical languages do not have a word for culture in the sense we use it, e. g. when we speak of "Harappan Culture" or our "Cultural heritage". We mean by that latter term, the ensemble of material artifacts, symbol systems, value perceptions, ideas and beliefs, institutions, religions, scriptures, and rituals, handed over from generation to generation.

We have no word for it in Sanskrit or Greek. Speaking of Sanskrit, the very name of the language seems to indicate a 'cultured' language over against a more primitive ~~Prakrit~~ Prakrit.

---

2. Raymond Williams: Keywords: A Vocabulary of culture and society, New York, 1976, P. 76.

---

In the Brahmanical texts Samskāra<sup>3</sup> is a technical term for the various purificatory sacramental rites which integrate one into the corpus of the faithful and into the 'whole', making one holy. It is of frequent occurrence in that sense in the Dharmasastras; it is quite understandable that our sense of culture as the ensemble of social creativity was not central to the more Vedantic texts, where our earthly creativity has little significance in relation to the realisation of the identity with the Absolute.

Neither do we find an equivalent for German Kultur or English 'culture' in the Greek. The closest term is Paideia. Plato uses this term, which literally means the bringing up of a child,<sup>as</sup> also for mental culture.<sup>4</sup> But Paideia refers to cultural refinement in a person, rather than to the ensemble of cultural creativity in a society-education rather than culture in the anthropological sense.

The situation in Latin is slightly better, because the English word culture has its roots in Latin Colo= to cultivate, to tend; Cultus= cultivated, polished, refined; and Cultura= cultivating, refinement. It is in this sense that Cicero says that cultura animi philosophia est.<sup>5</sup>

---

3. Samskāra also refers to capacities like Vega or motion, bhāvana or feeling, memory and imagination and sthitisthāpakatva or a kind of inertia. Samskr̥ti means sacramental purification, part of Karmayōga.

4. Protagoras 327 D, Gorgias, 470 ~~✗~~.E

5. <sup>a</sup> 'The cultivating of the soul is philosophy' Cicero, Tusculanae Disputationes 2, 13.

It is this elitist sense of culture as personal refinement that came into our languages as culture or samskr̥ti, Samskāra; with the advent of anthropology as a discipline, the new meaning of ensemble of social creativity came into vogue.

The Pali equivalent Samk<sup>ti</sup>āra, meaning all the potentialities and possible forms of sentient experience, has<sup>a</sup> negative meaning, denoting predispositions formed from past experiences, as something to be overcome in order to attain enlightenment.

Let us conclude this etymological excursus at this point and make a few affirmations;

- a) Culture in the sense of ensemble of a Society's creativity is rather new in all our languages; it dates from the development of cultural anthropology as an academic discipline and (b) The distinction has to be constantly kept in mind between culture as the personal refinement of a person or an elite group and culture as the sum-total of social creativity.

Our concern in this paper is with the latter.

Equally difficult is the definition of Science. We could point to the three different senses of modern science as (a) an approach or method<sup>of</sup> gaining knowledge; (b) as a body of knowledge and (c) as a huge human enterprise, inseparable from <sup>technology</sup>~~archeology~~, political economy and cultural creativity. We will in this paper be focussing on<sup>on</sup> ~~as~~ the third meaning of science- as the Wissenschaftsindustrie.

I am aware of other distinctions about the meaning of Science. e.g. those offered by the Australian A.F. Chalmers in What is This Thing called Science ? 6

---

6. University of Queensland Press, 1976, see pp. 98ff.



Chalmers distinguishes between: (a) the Subjectivist approach to science, as a set of operational beliefs and hypotheses held by ~~in~~ individual scientists, (b) the Consensus approach to science (Kuhn)<sup>7</sup> as the beliefs, theories and convictions accepted by the scientific community; and (c) the Objectivist approach (Popper)<sup>8</sup> which regards the scientific theories having an autonomous existence on their own, apart from any individual or consensus opinion.

We will leave that debate aside and concentrate on Science as a corporate social activity of competent human beings in relation to each other and to the so-called world of nature. It involves an enormous budget, a huge number of workers, and big technologically sophisticated laboratories like for example the underground particle accelerator of C E R N near Geneva, partly in Switzerland and partly in France, some seven Kilometers long and costing billions of dollars. It is this huge <sup>complex</sup> behemoth that I call the Wissenschaftsindustrie or science industry, a most powerful social force.

- 
7. Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,  
University of Chicago Press, 1970.
  8. Karl R. Popper, Objective Knowledge, Oxford,  
Oxford University Press, 1972.

## The Role of Science in Culture

The enterprise called science industry is part of the political economy. If ~~Science~~ - <sup>Technology</sup> forms the main current of social creativity or of the forces of production, then political economy deals with the way that social creativity is organized, managed and controlled, i.e. the relations of production. This classical marxist distinction and relation between forces of production and relations of production can be easily oversimplified.

The Science industry ~~is~~ plays a role at both levels - i.e. in the development of science/technology as force of production and as a lobby and power unit ~~in~~ in the political economy. In science-industry we include all research programmes of corporations, of universities and institutes, and of the defence establishments. Obviously these are also political actors influencing and in some cases controlling the political economy.

We have to posit a third level in social creativity or culture - the level of ideological orientation or value choices. Unlike the lower levels of science/technology (forces of productions) and political economy (relations of production) this third level is less tangible and structured, but by no means less decisive in shaping a culture. The value choices are not unrelated to the question of where the controlling power is concentrated in a society. In a bourgeois-liberal society, the interests of the class in power would dominate the value choices of society. If loyalty and fidelity were high values in a <sup>u</sup>feudal society, efficiency, <sup>t</sup>punctuality and responsibility became high values in a production-oriented bourgeois society. In Socialist societies the elimination of private dissent may have been a high value once; social conformity thus became a desired value choice.

At the level of value choice it is not simply the interests of the ruling class that plays a decisive role; it is also the particular religion or secular ideology which plays an equally decisive role. In Socialist ideology as well as <sup>in</sup> the bourgeois-liberal ideology, the role of science is an important factor, since both these ideologies and modern science are children of the European Enlightenment. It may be more accurate to say that modern science is a foster-child of the European Enlightenment, because the child had already been born and was struggling for survival when the Enlightenment began in Europe and adopted modern science as <sup>a</sup> useful foster-child.

Socialism puts a high value on science as a primary motor for social change and social development. Science/technology not only enhances the forces of production and thus changes also the political economy or the relations of production. It acts also as a revolutionary force in overcoming the forces of stagnation and backwardness, in counteracting the reactionary forces of superstition and dead tradition.

Nehru recognized this social revolutionary dynamic of science/technology, particularly in a caste-ridden, tradition-bound society such as ours. Hence his emphasis on the 'scientific temper' as something to be infused into the whole of society, rather than merely into the scientific community. The expressions 'Scientific temper', 'Scientific ethos' and 'scientific culture' were coined in the ~~xxx~~ early decades of our century, when Western societies nurtured a basic optimism about science and its capacity to solve all the problems of humanity. 'Scientific Culture' was almost regarded as an alternative to traditional 'humanistic culture'. Our own Indian debate some years ago between the advocates of the scientific temper

manifesto of some scientists, and partisans of the opposing humanist manifesto of Ashish Nandy and his friends pointed to this conflict.

That debate was left unresolved and did not proceed very far beyond mutual recriminations. We need to re-open that debate and pursue it with less partisan fervour. C. P. Snow, in his famous lecture on 'Two Cultures' also sought to drive a wedge between science and art as determinants of culture. It was mostly directed against the Marxist contention that the material conditions of the base (Science- technology and political economy) largely determine the content of the super-structure, where art and culture were supposed to be lodged.

Marxism itself made the mistake of regarding art as 'illustrative science' and an ideological instrument. Modern Marxism is moving out of this unrealistic, scientific<sup>stic</sup> understanding<sup>of</sup> art and culture, either as a direct product of conditions in the base, or as a mere instrument of a 'scientific' ideology. Recent marxist writer advocate ~~the~~ "the harmonious integration of scientific-technical and humanitarian culture, the peculiarities and social functions of each being fully retained", 9

The point was put more elaborately by the Soviet Philosopher Dr. Boris Grigoryan (of the Institute of Philosophy of the U S S R Academy of Sciences) at the 18th World Congress of Philosophy (Brighton, U.K. 1988) :

" Scientific knowledge is a powerful means of mastering nature, of accomplishing practical tasks needed for the reproduction of human life. But for all its enormous potentialities.... this knowledge is unable to elaborate the general principles and norms of human behaviour which determine the basic vital attitudes of man, his way of

---

life and the strategy of individual and social development"

If one accepts this principle that scientific knowledge is unable to elaborate the general principles and norms for human behaviour, we will need to revise our views of the 'Scientific temper' and a 'Scientific culture'.

Science can be only one element in the evolution of human culture and should not be allowed to dominate culture, since it is intrinsically incapable of giving decisive orientation to human socio-cultural development. It is at this point necessary to stress the simple fact that scientism is a superstition, which must be counter-acted with the utmost vigour.

This can be done only by putting science in its place- as important operational knowledge, but no more. The mystique of science as omniscient and omni-competent must be dispelled if humanity is to survive. Just as the power of pseudo-religion was broken by the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment in Europe, it is time for us, in this bicentennial year of the French Revolution, to dethrone science from the apex of culture, to emancipate science from its bondage to war and profit, and re-deploy it as an instrument of justice and peace, and of maintaining of the life-fost<sup>e</sup>ring quality of our environment .

There are at least two ways <sup>of</sup> ~~in which this~~ putting science in its place, not as authority over humanity, but as its faithful servant and often as its loving critic. The first is to promote the other aspects of human cultural creativity/- poetry and literature, art and music, dance and drama, film and T V/- in order to raise again in a fresh way the questions about orientation for human development, and not merely <sup>or</sup> as entertainment and enjoyment. This implies that just as

the science industry is to be emancipated from its enslavement to war, profit and power-seeking, the culture-industry has also to be emancipated from bondage to the same <sup>p</sup>re<sup>r</sup>pressive forces. This is not to make art instrumental, but to restore it to its true function as an expression of fundamental human perceptions of reality and of fundamental human aspirations for fulfillment. These cannot be done in a conceptual<sup>ual</sup> - rational form, though the conceptual-rational as art criticism will still have an important part ~~to~~ to play.

For me this means primarily a new consciousness among the creators of culture, which always includes not only the professionals of art and art criticism, but also the common people to whom art is addressed and for whom true art exists.

---

Page No 8

9. A. Ya. Zis: "On the ~~Q~~uestion of Correlation between the Structures of Philosophical and Artistic Thought", in Marxist- Leninist Aesthetic and ~~A~~ The Arts, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, p. 118
10. U S S R Academy of Sciences, The Problem of Man in Philosophy, "Social Sciences Today" Editorial Board, Moscow, 1988 P. 142.

This triple liberation<sup>/</sup> of science- technology, political econo  
and artistic creativity<sup>/</sup> from enslavement to war, profit and  
power- mongering seems to me the only way to make culture healthy  
and life-fost<sup>e</sup>ring. All three power - groupings must enter into  
a new dialogue, about human perceptions of reality and orientations  
for human development. They must ask afresh and in dialogue with ea  
other questions about the meaning of their own activity in the  
context of the present human predicament, and provide their own  
answers, also in dialogue, through their own media<sup>/</sup> new theoretical  
formulations and new technologies, fresh structurings of political  
economic power and creativity, and more humanity-oriented artistic  
and cultural creativity and criticism.

I do not have time here to further develop this notion of  
triple liberation and three- ~~XXXXX~~ <sup>✓n</sup> covered dialogue in the interest  
of the whole of humanity, and all life and all existence. I have  
to conclude with a word about the second way of

putting science in its place, in the interest of making science itself serve human development and cultural creativity. I wish to say a word about 'religion', not because I am myself 'religious', but because I care about humanity and its ~~to~~ healing.

Religion ruled the ~~roost~~<sup>Roman</sup> in Europe in the medieval period. The Papacy took over the role of the ~~Emper~~ Roman Emperor in uniting the West. Through the development of a clerical cadre which functioned as a civil service (and sometimes as army), a corpus of <sup>ecclesiastical</sup> Canon law taking the place of <sup>Roman</sup> civil law, and a body of precise dogmas as the expression of inviolable truth, the Roman Catholic popes like Leo I (died 461) Gregory I (ca 540-604) and Innocent III (1160-1216) managed to make the Roman Church's authority superior to everything else. <sup>European</sup> Kings trembled before Rome's 'spiritual' as well as civil-political authority exercised through the so-called 'spiritual' authority. Rome's hegemony dominated all European thought. 'Roma locuta est, causa finita est' (Rome has spoken, the matter is ~~finished~~<sup>ended</sup>).

It is this authority of Rome that was gradually overthrown by the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment; modern



Science came in to occupy the vacuum left by the church's dethronement. In this twentieth century European civilisation moved to the position: "scientia locuta est, causa finita est" (science has spoken, the matter is ended).

This enthronement of modern science on the world's imperial throne does not work in the interests of humanity. Science's place is not on the throne, but in the fields of labour. Emancipated from its throne and from its simultaneous bondage to the real occupants of the top of the power-pyramid (~~war, profit, power~~ those promoting war and militarism, pursuing profit and expanding their own power), science/technology can be an extremely efficient and necessary servant of humanity.

But it cannot be allowed to dominate culture. Science cannot recreate culture. Science-technology is already alienated from the people; and its run-away structures of domination — over people's minds, their daily activities, over politics and economics and over the science-industry and the culture-industry as well as over the academy — will have to be dismantled and new structures established. Science will have to accept its place along with art and literature as human activities and expressions

Religion has <sup>long</sup> been dethroned — not only from over-all imperial power, but from political-economic institutions, ~~and~~ from philosophy and from the academy. It cannot be re-enthroned <sup>as some fundamentalists hope</sup>. But the civic rights of religions have to be re-recognized, and religious groups have to be re-trained to accept their civic responsibilities. Religions <sup>teachings</sup> must have at least as much place in society as secular ideologies.

Here in Asia, as also elsewhere, religion has been the matrix of all culture. We in Asia have a particular task. Our religious heritage is immensely rich and varied, but our educated elite has little access to it. We are heavily under the influence of European civilization and culture; so much so that western educated <sup>Asian</sup> people are often psychologically ill fitted to respond ~~to the~~ positively to their own cultural heritage.

The world needs at this juncture a contribution from the various Asian cultures to balance the one-sided <sup>European</sup> focus on the 'external' world and so-called 'objective' knowledge. The world is neither external to us, nor are we external to it. We are integral parts of the world with a capacity to transcend and to transform that world. That is what culture really means — transformation of

the human self and the world, in order that humanity-in-the-world expresses higher realms of meaning, both transcendental meaning and meaning within historical social existence.

Asian religions at present seem incapable of doing this self-and-world transformation in a creative way, drawing upon the immense wealth of Asia's cultural-religious heritage. Science-technology can be a very useful and powerful instrument in that transformation, but cannot provide the orientation for cultural creativity. The Asian religious-cultural-philosophical heritage when adequately absorbed, can create a new orientation for cultural creativity. That is the challenge before us. Science-technology can properly transform human culture, only when the orientation for such transformation comes from outside modern science-technology. A major source for such orientation lies to hand in our own cultural heritage, which we have so sadly neglected.