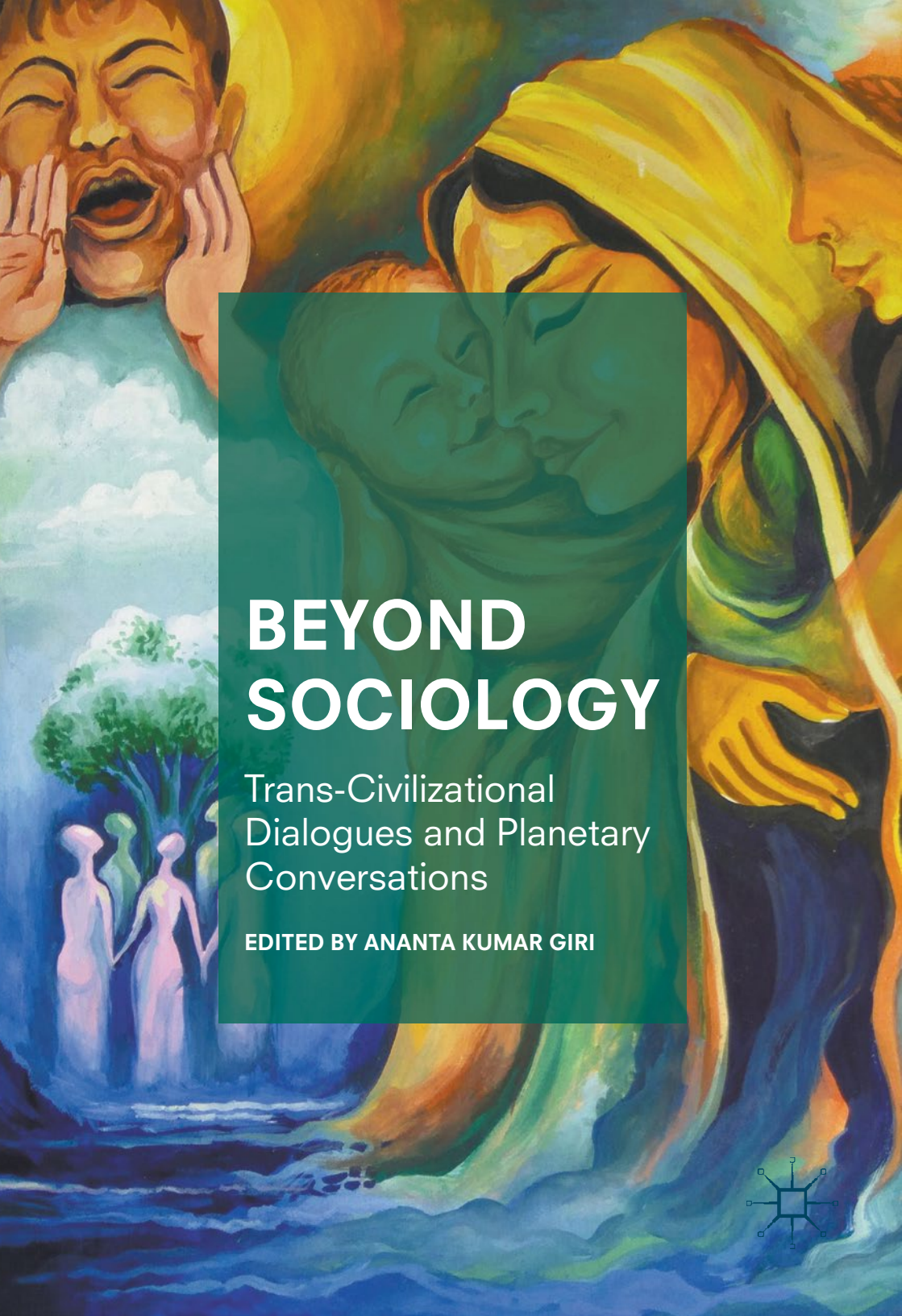

BEYOND SOCIOLOGY

Trans-Civilizational Dialogues and Planetary Conversations

EDITED BY ANANTA KUMAR GIRI

Beyond Sociology

Ananta Kumar Giri
Editor

Beyond Sociology

Trans-Civilizational Dialogues and Planetary Conversations

palgrave
macmillan

Editor
Ananta Kumar Giri
Madras Institute of Development Studies
Chennai, India

ISBN 978-981-10-6640-5 ISBN 978-981-10-6641-2 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017959739

Cover illustration: © Sarat Kumar Panda

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

For P.D. Khera, Björn Wittrock, Rabi Narayan Mohanty, James L. Peacock and Robert Wuthnow

Preface

Disciplines such as sociology emerged in the context of the rise of the modern world, and today there is an epochal challenge to rethink, transform and practice these disciplines in transdisciplinary and transcivilizational ways, where the very terms of our discourse such as society, self, culture, state and the world emerge out of dialogues among civilizations and cultures and rooted planetary conversations across borders rather than continuing the uncritical continuance and reproduction of Eurocentric definitions of situations. *Beyond Sociology* carries such a project of critique, creativity, reconstitution and transformation as it seeks to cultivate pathways of transdisciplinary and transcivilizational sociology beyond the traps of singular valorizations—Western or Eastern.

This journey of ours, exploring the pathways of *Beyond Sociology*, began in 2005 at the World Congress of Sociology in Stockholm organized by the International Institute of Sociology. My friend and co-traveler John Clammer and I had co-organized a session on this theme. Our book builds upon this session and includes some new contributions as well.

The Stockholm conference was nurtured by Björn Wittröck, Principal of Swedish Collegium of Advanced Studies (SCASS), Uppsala. Björn is a remarkable human being, a deep and kind seeker and inspirer, and is a great institution leader. Over the last three decades Björn has nurtured so many collaborative conversations and projects around the world and has brought many scholars to SCASS, Uppsala, to cultivate new ways of thinking and being. Ever since my first meeting with him in 1999, I have continued to draw inspiration from his indefatigable energy and devoted scholarship. We dedicate this book as a gift of our love and gratitude to Björn for the way he

has challenged us to go beyond disciplines and familiar prisons in search of broad horizons. We also dedicate this book to four other creative social scientists who challenge us to go beyond sociology and anthropology as we know. Robert Wuthnow is a creative sociologist whose sociological quest goes beyond conventional sociological concerns, and it explores issues of art, creativity and spirituality in open ways. His *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist* is an inspiring example of such a journey. Similarly, James L. Peacock explores new modes of practicing social sciences in creative and transdisciplinary ways, combining deep scholarship with generosity of spirit and heart. His *Anthropological Lens* is a remarkable example of such a journey. P.D. Khera was an inspiring teacher and student of sociology who nurtured generations of students at Hindu College, University of Delhi. What was remarkable was that every afternoon after classes he used to spend more time in the library than the students. Khera was also deeply concerned with the plight of the human condition, which he observed as he walked through the streets of Delhi. In 1984 he marched against the anti-Sikh riots, and after his retirement he spent time with tribal people of India. Rabi Narayan Mohanty was a devoted teacher and scholar of sociology who nurtured generations of students in Odisha. He lived and breathed with the spirit of sociology until Fate tragically took him away from us in a road accident, which took place as he was on his way to attend a sociology board meeting at Fakir Mohan University, Balasore. Mohanty's *The Academic Elite* is a landmark study that inspires scholars of sociology to strive for new depth and height in their research and understanding. It is with gratitude that we dedicate this book to P.D. Khera, James L. Peacock, Rabi Narayan Mohanty, Björn Wittrock and Robert Wuthnow for what we owe to them as regards sociology, humanity and much more.

The book has taken a long time to come together, and I thank fellow contributors for their patience and kindness. I thank my dear friend Marcus Bussey of the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia for his thoughtful Afterword. I thank Sara Crowley Vigneau and Connie Li of Palgrave Macmillan for their kind interest in and support for the project. I thank Ashwin V. for his help in preparing the manuscript. Finally, I hope this work helps us to cultivate new sociological imagination and new ways of being alive and understanding the world in these challenging times of ours.

Deepavali
Festival of Colors

Chennai
18 October 2017

Ananta Kumar Giri

Acknowledgements and Gratitude

We are grateful to the following sources, where the chapters were first published.

Chapter 1: Daya Krishna, *Social Philosophy: Past and Future* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1969).

Chapters 3, 6 and 10 build upon Ananta Kumar Giri, *Beyond Sociology: Windows and Horizons* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2009).

Chapter 7 first appeared as Philip Wexler, Society and Mysticism. In: Philip Wexler and Jonathan Garb (Eds.), *After Spirituality: Studies in Mystical Traditions* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012). Printed with the kind permission of the publisher.

Contents

1 **Beyond Sociology: An Introduction and An Invitation** 1
Ananta Kumar Giri

2 **The Concept of Society: Beyond the Socio-Centric and *Atman*-Centric Predicament** 11
Daya Krishna

3 **Beyond Sociology: Cultivating an Ontological Epistemology of Participation** 29
Ananta Kumar Giri

4 **Deep Sociology** 53
John Clammer

5 **Inferential Dialectics: On Dialectical Reasoning in Critical Social Science and the Socio-Cultural World** 71
Piet Strydom

6 **Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action: From Discourse Ethics to Spiritual Transformations** 93
Ananta Kumar Giri

7 **Beyond Sociology: Mysticism and Society** 123
Philip Wexler

8 **Confucian Self-Transformation as an Alternative Sociology: Meaningful Action vs. Performance with Differential Profundity** 145
Wei-Hsu Lu

9 **Structure, Agency and Victimization: On the Ethics of Scientific Writing** 173
Gudrun Dahl

10 **With and Beyond Plurality of Standpoints: Sociology and the *Sadhana* of Multi-Valued Logic and Living** 193
Ananta Kumar Giri

11 **Afterword: Beyond a Materialist Sociology** 221
Marcus Bussey

Index 225

Notes on Editor and Contributors

Ananta Kumar Giri is a professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India. He has taught and undertaken research in many universities in India and abroad, including Aalborg University (Denmark), *Maison des sciences de l'homme*, Paris (France), the University of Kentucky (USA), University of Freiburg and Humboldt University (Germany), Jagiellonian University (Poland) and Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India). He has an abiding interest in social movements and cultural change, criticism, creativity and contemporary dialectics of transformation, theories of self, culture and society, and creative streams in education, philosophy and literature. He has written and edited around two dozen books in Odia and English, including *Global Transformations: Postmodernity and Beyond* (1998); *Sameekhya o Purodrusti* (Criticism and Vision of the Future, 1999); *Patha Prantara Nrutattwa* (Anthropology of the Street Corner, 2000); *Conversations and Transformations: Toward a New Ethics of Self and Society* (2002); *Self-Development and Social Transformations? The Vision and Practice of Self-Study Mobilization of Swadhyaya* (2008); *Mochi o Darshanika* (The Cobbler and the Philosopher, 2009); *Sociology and Beyond: Windows and Horizons* (2012), *Knowledge and Human Liberation: Towards Planetary Realizations* (2013); *Philosophy and Anthropology: Border-Crossing and Transformations* (co-edited with John Clammer, 2013); *New Horizons of Human Development* (editor, 2015); *Pathways of Creative Research: Towards a Festival of Dialogues* (editor, 2017) and *Beyond Cosmopolitanism: Towards Planetary Transformations* (editor, 2018).

Marcus Bussey is a futurist and researcher with Arts Research in the Creative Humanities (ARCH), University of the Sunshine Coast, Autralia. He is interested in cultural processes that energize social transformation. He uses futures thinking to challenge the dominant beliefs and assumptions that constrain human responses to rapid cultural, social and technological change. Marcus has a fascination with

the poetics of anticipation and its expression through aesthetics, heritage, myth and literature. His workshops, research and writing all focus on the quest for individual and collective empowerment and creative and hopeful pathways to the future. Marcus has held fellowships at Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, and Tamkang University, Taiwan. He is currently Discipline Head of History and Program Leader in Futures Studies at his university.

John Clammer is professor in the Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities at O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Delhi National Capital Region (India). He was formerly Professor of Development Sociology at the United Nations University, Tokyo, and prior to that for almost two decades was Professor of Comparative Sociology and Asian Studies at Sophia University, Tokyo. He has taught at the University of Hull and the National University of Singapore, and has been a Visiting Professor or Fellow at the Universities of Essex, Oxford, Kent, Buenos Aires, Weimar, Handong (South Korea), Pondicherry, the Australian National University and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. His most recent books include *Culture, Development and Social Theory: Towards an Integrated Social Development* (2012), *Art, Culture and International Development: Humanizing Social Transformation* (2015) and most recently *Cultures of Transition and Sustainability* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Gudrun Dahl was in her early work concerned with contemporary change among pastoral nomads in Kenya and Sudan, with a particular interest in the interaction between production and social form, notably in *Suffering Grass: Subsistence and Society of the Waso Borana*. She also co-authored (with A. Hjort) a general book on pastoral production, *Having Herds, Pastoral Herd Growth and Household Economy* (1976) and a monograph on the Atmaan Beja of Northeastern Sudan, *Responsible Man* (1991), translated into Arabic in 2016. Dahl has also ventured into research in a range of other anthropological areas such as the anthropology of childhood, gender issues, how nationalism elaborates cultural views on Nature, the ethics of anthropological writing and the issue of buzzword rhetorics in development. In 2012 she published *Modernities on the Move* (with Ö. Bartholdsson, P. Favero and S. Khosravi). In 1989 she was appointed Full Professor of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University, Sweden, with particular emphasis on development research. She retired from her chair in 2015, having also served for six years as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at Stockholm University. As professor emerita she mainly works on issues of moral arguments raised in the context of environmental issues.

Daya Krishna, the pre-eminent philosopher of our times, taught at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (India). He is the author of numerous ground-breaking works in philosophy and social sciences including *Contrary Thinking*.

Wei-Hsu Lu, who received his sociological education at Lancaster University and the University of Manchester (UK), is currently associate professor of sociology at East China University of Science and Technology. He has particular interests in methodological issues in sociology, qualitative research methods and Confucian self-transformation. Therefore, he has engaged in a long-term project aiming at creating a sociological complex that includes a methodology, a method and several empirical studies and is informed by Confucian self-transformation, autoethnography and actor-network theory. He recently published an article entitled "Self-Transformation in Go Games: An Autoethnographic Study of a Serious Leisure Pursuit."

Piet Strydom, originally an émigré from the apartheid regime South Africa, retired in 2011 from the School of Sociology and Philosophy, University College Cork (Ireland). Besides many articles, some well noted, in journals, anthologies and encyclopedias, major publications include *Contemporary Critical Theory and Methodology* (2011), *New Horizons of Critical Theory: Collective Learning and Triple Contingency* (2009), *Risk, Environment and Society* (2002), and *Discourse and Knowledge* (2000). He edited *Philosophies of Social Science* (2003, with Gerard Delanty) as well as special issues of the *European Journal of Social Theory* and the *Irish Journal of Sociology*.

Philip Wexler is Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2002 he was appointed Professor of Sociology of Education, and then Unterberg Chair in Jewish Social and Educational History. Since retirement, he has been Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences at the Bergische University of Wuppertal (Germany), as well as at Brandeis University (USA). Wexler received a bachelor's degree from New York University (UK) and master's and doctoral degrees in sociology from Princeton University (USA). While on leave from the Hebrew University, he served as Bronfman Professor at Brandeis University. Wexler is the author of a number of books in the fields of sociology of religion and sociology of education. He was Editor of the American Sociological Association journal, *Sociology of Education*. In 2008–9, together with Jonathan Garb, he convened a year-long working group at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, on Sociology and Anthropology of Jewish Mysticism in Comparative Perspective. His publications include: *After Postmodernism: Education, Politics, and Identity* (1995, with R.A. Smith); *Holy Sparks: Social Theory, Education, and Religion (1996); The Mystical Society: An Emerging Social Vision* (2000); *Mystical Interactions: Sociology, Jewish Mysticism and Education* (2007) and *Mystical Sociology: Toward a Cosmic Sociology* (2013).

List of Figures

Fig. 5.1	The dialectics of inference	80
Fig. 8.1	The Ego's experiences of the world in two forms	147
Fig. 8.2	The Ego's experiences of its own activity in two forms	148
Fig. 8.3	Which move is the best for the black side?	159
Fig. 8.4	The format of the two pages of the sixty-sixth maxim	161

CHAPTER 1

Beyond Sociology: An Introduction and An Invitation

Ananta Kumar Giri

Exploring new frontiers of sociology does not mean extending existing theories and methods but interrogating some of its uncritically accepted modernist assumptions, such as the equating of society and nation-state, the dualism of individual and society and that of ontology and epistemology. *Beyond Sociology* explores pathways in which we go beyond sociology in terms of exploring the contours of a transformational sociology; this seeks to transform the assumptions of conventional sociological theorizing and practice as well as modes of sociological imagination. Despite all the waters that have flowed around the world for the last 150 years, contemporary sociology, even so-called global sociology, suffers from what Ulrich Beck called the NATO-like fire power of Western sociology. In this context, sociology has to open itself to transcivilizational dialogues and planetary conversations about the very themes of thinking about self, culture and society. So far, globalization of sociology has meant globalization of themes and methods of modernist sociology, which makes an easy equation between sociology and modernity. For sociologists such as Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and André Béteille, sociology is a modern discipline and is post-traditional (Beck et al. 1994; Béteille 2002). But if sociology

A.K. Giri (✉)
Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_1

blindly follows the post-traditional teleology of modernity how can it study varieties of forms of life—traditional, modern, postmodern and transmodern (cf. Dussel 2017)?[1] These varieties of forms of life exist not only in the so called traditional societies such as India or Lapland but in all contemporary societies—whether India, Indonesia, Sweden, France, Britain, Germany, Singapore, China or the USA. *Beyond Sociology* thus initially challenges us to go beyond an a priori teleological privileging of the post-traditional telos of modernist sociology. It invites us for a foundational interrogation of modernist sociology as a prelude to making sociology part of a planetary conversation about the very themes such as society and individual that it seeks to understand.

It is only with such a foundational interrogation that sociology can open itself to transcivilizational dialogues and planetary conversations. In planetary conversations, we converse and learn together by moving across our initial locations and given borders. For example, in Western sociology power is considered an important part of the constitution of self, culture and society. But in Indian spiritual traditions, it is not only power but also *sraddha*—love and reverence for life. For example, in Srimad Bhagavad Gita, one of the texts of life in Indian traditions, it is written: *Sraddha Mayo Ayam Purusha, Jo Jat Sradha So Eba Sa*. This means the *Purusha*—the human person (including men, women and children, and not just man)—is characterized by *sraddha*. One is what one loves. These lines also offer some pre-suppositions about self, culture and society like the presupposition about power offered by Max Weber and Michel Foucault, and the justification offered by Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 2001). On the other hand, some of the most enchanting formulations about self, culture and society in Indian spiritual traditions fail to address and transform the sociological condition of power in the direction of radical democracy. Thus what is called for is not a one-sided valorization of certain aspects of one's culture, such as spirituality from India and power from the West, but a mutual confrontation of one's pre-suppositions and a broadening of our universe of discourse (cf. Giri 2012, 2013a, b).

The above were some of the questions that inspired me and John Clammer to convene the session "Beyond Sociology" at the thirty-seventh World Congress of Sociology at Stockholm in July 2005. The present book builds upon some of the papers presented in that session as well as other contributions.

The essays in this book in their own ways help us to understand the limitations of established conventions of sociology and nurture the

pathways that allow us to go beyond the sociology we know. The opening chapter by the inspiring thinker and philosopher Daya Krishna tells us that social does not have the same pre-eminence in all traditions as it does in modern Western sociology. Daya Krishna's discussion of the two predicaments of *socio-centrism* and *atman-centrism* helps us in outlining a new sociology beyond the socio-centric sociology of modernity. But these two predicaments today can also be nurtured with the vision and practice of *Anatta* or no-self, which interrogates the logic of both socio-centrism and atman-centrism, and helps to cultivate emptiness in both self and society and move from ego to egolessness in both self, other and the world. In Buddhist paths of thinking, being and becoming, *anatta* is part of *pattipacchasamudaya*, dependent co-origination, which is also part of manifold webs of interdependence. This interdependence is nurtured not only by what Thich Nhat Hanh calls Interbeing but also Transbeing, where we are animated by not only immanence but also transcendence. Daya Krishna's chapter is followed by Ananta Kumar Giri's "Beyond Sociology: Cultivating an Ontological Epistemology of Participation," in which Giri explores pathways that go beyond conventional sociology by exploring the work and meditation of ontological sociality in self, culture and society, which involves both ontological and epistemic engagement. For Giri, going beyond sociology urges us to reconstitute both society and subjectivity: society is a field of ontological epistemology of participation, and subjectivity consists simultaneously of unconscious, sociological role occupant and transcendental self (see Giri 2006, 2017a, b, c). In his subsequent chapter, "Deep Sociology," John Clammer follows some of these concerns further by inviting us to explore pathways of a deep sociology going beyond continued "epistemological Eurocentrism" and taking part in cross-cultural dialogues and conversations, for example between Japan and the West (see Clammer 1995). Clammer also urges us to take the philosophical dimensions of sociology and social life, especially current processes of globalization, seriously. This means rethinking our fundamental assumptions in sociology about society and individuals, such as an oversocialized view of the individual as predominantly a product of society. For Clammer, "an oversocialized and overculturalized notion of self cannot provide the foundation for an adequate sociology of the real world, as the sociology of the body demonstrates." He urges us to transform the "existential shallowness, culturalism and anthropocentrism of conventional sociology with the possibility of a rich and transforming engagement with the issues and approaches to life that artists, spiritual seekers,

poets and deep ecologists have long pioneered and the absence of which is both the source of so much of aridity of sociology and the crises that global society and environment now confront."

Clammer raises some fundamental questions about our conceptions of society and sociology. The following chapter by Piet Strydom, "Inferential Dialectics: On Dialectical Reasoning in Critical Social Science and the Sociocultural World," carries this spirit of deep inquiry and reconstitution further. Strydom, true to his deep engagement in critique and reconstitution, challenges us to rethink our conventional methodologies such as dialectics and introduces a very creative path of inference in it. As he tells us, he introduces the "inferential stance which allows the clarification of the operation of different yet closely related modes of inference in both social science and the sociocultural world—the latter being particularly important since inference is usually associated with scientific practice rather than with social action, interaction, discourse and so forth."

Strydom, in his engagement, makes a dialogue with Jürgen Habermas and in his subsequent chapter, "Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action: From Discourse Ethics to Spiritual Transformations," Ananta Kumar Giri takes this dialogue further. Giri challenges us to rethink and reconstitute the themes of moral consciousness, discourse ethics and communicative action that Habermas uses by realizing their need for further conceptual, practical and spiritual transformations. Giri here engages with Jürgen Habermas and Sri Aurobindo, exploring pathways of mutual transformation by simultaneously cultivating discourse ethics suggested by Habermas and practical and integral spirituality striven towards by Sri Aurobindo. With a spiritual engagement, discourse ethics goes beyond argumentation towards deeper meditation, mutual listening and care, while with the practice of radical democracy inherent in discourse ethics, spirituality becomes less authoritarian and more dialogical.

Giri's spiritual opening of the social and sociological interrogation of the spiritual is accompanied by Philip Wexler's chapter on mysticism and society, in which Wexler challenges us to understand the mystical engagement with sociology in the works of pioneers such as Max Weber, George Simmel and William James, as well as the mystical dimension in society. Interactions which constitute social relations and society are not only social but also mystic and cosmic. For Wexler, mysticism has to be understood not in terms of dualism between other-worldly and this-worldly realms, as Weber suggests, but as a dynamic creative force moving in

between and across different realms such as this world and the other world which is manifest in the lives of both individual and society. Mysticism calls for a wider definition of the meaning of the social and urges us to go beyond "an oversocialized" view of man, as critiqued by Dennis Wrong and referred to in Clammer's chapter in this volume. Wexler here draws our attention to Kabbalah, the mystical tradition in Judaism, as well as to Tantra, from Indian traditions. For Wexler, "Against Weber's view of mysticism as divided between other-worldly and inner-worldly, in the Kabbalah […] mysticism is neither. It is between worlds, dynamic, relational and empowering." Wexler further argues:

> To put it simply and boldly, both individualism and culturalism, as explanations, are historically inappropriate to an emergent world in which the meaning of society itself is changing. Against the "end of the social views," which argues the triumph, albeit dissentingly, of informationalization, or the supercessation of persons by the objectivization of social relations, the view presented here is that the social is being transformed in cosmicization. Within such a wider, transformed social field, mysticism comes to the fore as a societally central social relation. The character of mysticism, as described in classical Kabbalah and Tantra—their interactive dynamics of emanations and divine corporealizations, embodied entextualizations of classical mystical beliefs and practices—reveals itself to be—now, more evidently, because of the expansion of the meaning of the social horizon—a fully social relation.

Wexler's chapter is followed by Wei-Hsu Lu, who presents us with an alternative sociology based upon Confucian vision and practice of self-transformation. If Wexler argues that conventional models of social interactions lack a mystical dimension and cosmic interaction, Lu argues how it lacks a performative dimension especially with regard to the differential profundity of the participants of social life. To elaborate his argument, Lu presents us the game of Go from Chinese civilization and society and the perspective of Mencius with regard to the vision and practice of self-transformation. He discusses the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schultz and sociology of symbolic interaction of Herbert Blumer, and argues how their approaches lack not only attention to differential profundity of participants in interaction but also the need for compassion and self-transformation in interactions as well as in social life. As Lu argues, "The philosophy of free will or subjectivity in interpretativism conceals the phenomena of "differential profundity (差異境界)." For Lu,

> In Schütz's and Blumer's programs, how persons conduct themselves in social activities is converted into how subjects move their physical bodies to communicate with one another. This conversion from lived persons into philosophical subjects plus their physical bodies is the root of the blind spot in both Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism … Mencius's teachings about self-transformation have the potential to equip us with a distinct approach to the study of lived persons' performance with differential profundity because his teachings are not based on any philosophical tradition of subject and object. Rather, his teachings about self-transformation and about lived persons' appropriate performance in their surroundings come from the philosophical anthropology of qi (氣). For Mencius, a lived person is not an isolated subject who contemplates the world and studies other human beings' conduct as the motion of things without thoughts. Moreover, there is no problem of intersubjective communication in Mencius's view. There is no such philosophical theory in which separate subjects are linked by their shared ability to constitute their intersubjective reality or to objectify their common world with the assistance of ideal types or language. Unlike Schütz or Blumer (together with Mead), Mencius did not assert that successful interactions in an in-group or successful joint actions must rely on the conditions that actors successfully express their minds or mental consciousness through their bodies, and that they successfully interpret others' bodily expressions as the indications of minds or mental consciousness. In his view, a lived person's performance toward other persons and things issues from this person's being affected by (感) and replying to (應), the surroundings through qi. Furthermore, one's ability to be suitably affected by and to suitably reply to one's settings can be cultivated, as long as one continually refines the quality of qi flowing through oneself.

Lu's chapter is followed by Gudrun Dahl's "Beyond Sociology: Structure, Agency and the Ethics of Writing," in which the author raises some foundational questions about the valorization of agency in contemporary discourses and scholarship where "agency is wielded on behalf of others, often in collective terms." As a critical anthropologist Dahl urges us to realize that when we, for example feminists and other advocates, attribute agency to others, it presents a "pre-theoretical moral commitment" which may do violence to the reality that we seek to understand. In this trope, "Agency becomes an unmarked category validated as good per se disregarding whether it contributes to a positive change in condition, maintains status quo or incurs damage or suffering to others."

Dahl's critique of agency also points to the limits of standpoint of agents in their social life as well as in ideological articulation. The

concluding chapter, by Giri, "With and Beyond Plurality of Standpoints: Sociology and the *Sadhana* of Multi-Valued Logic and Living," takes this issue further by rethinking and transforming sociological reasoning from the point of view of the issue of plurality of standpoints and the way they become part of a process of communicative and meditative pluralization. Building upon Karl Mannheim and André Béteille, Giri argues how each of the standpoints from where we begin and which we strive to move to or assert are partial in nature. But, for Giri,

> realizing the partial nature of one's standpoint and realizing that one's standpoint is interpenetrated or needs to be interpenetrated by others' standpoints calls for further work on self-transformation—transformation of one's one-dimensional epistemology and politics—mutual communication and institutional nurturance where institutions of society facilitate such realization of one's partiality and communication among partial standpoints through institutionally facilitated spaces and processes. This calls for understanding the way plurality of standpoints become part of multi-dimensional processes of pluralization. This is a further challenge for sociology. Here it is not enough only to confine sociology to the empirical study of society and not to accept the normative challenge of how sociological research can contribute to creating a field of knowledge, reflections, social relations and institutional space where plurality of standpoints go beyond their initial closures—self-justification and absolutist claim—and communicate with each other.

The key challenge for us is to realize the limits of our given standpoints and pluralize them. For Giri, it calls for a *sadhana* of multi-valued logic and living in place of the dominant either of logic of self vs. the other, the right or wrong. As he argues:

> How do we pluralize our plural standpoints which at the level of self, ideology and even sociological method present themselves in a singular, absolutist and exclusionary way? Pluralizing plural standpoints calls for generosity and expansion of points of view into circles of views on the part of both participants and observers which is not necessarily articulated and embodied in the sociological method as it is prevalent today. This calls for *sadhana* (striving) of multi-valued logic and living as well as spiritual transformation of our consciousness, method, self and society which are prone to cling to the absolutism of a singular standpoint. *Sadhana* or striving makes our knowledge, including locational knowledge of standpoint, not just received and taken for granted but evolving, interpenetrative and emergent.

In such a striving, sociology is not confined only to the so-called empirical level and isolated from the normative challenge of realizing the challenge of going beyond one's initial closure and absolutism. Sociology goes beyond the dualism of the empirical and the normative by striving to understand what T.N. Madan (2011) calls the "transempirical" dimension of our empirical reality, and by cultivating a new normative which emerges out of struggles and aspirations of people's lives for beauty, dignity and dialogues in the midst of ugliness, disrespect, violation and violence of many kinds.

The chapters in this volume in their many different ways help us go beyond contemporary dominant ways of thinking about and doing sociology, helping us to cultivate a transdisciplinary and deep sociology. Marcus Bussey in his Afterword explores the larger implication of this journey. He suggests how with this book we can explore "various intuitive, embodied, creative, aesthetic and spiritual modalities to delve beyond the conventional givens," and rethink, reconstitute and transform our taken-for-granted discourse and practices of sociology and the human condition.

Notes

1. In conventional classification of our world we are used to categories of traditional, modern and postmodern, but Enrique Dussel (2017) here challenges us to realize the significance of an emergent transmodern condition where we are not slaves of either tradition or modernity nor ahistorical children of a postmodern world but live creatively in our present-day world, building upon critical and transformative resources from all sources through creative memory work. To this memory work I add the dynamics of memory meditation. I share my following poem as a way of reimagining our condition as cross-fertilization of roots and routes through memory work and memory meditation:

   Roots and Routes: Memory Work, Meditation and Planetary Realizations

   1

   Roots and Routes
   Routes within Roots
   Roots with Routes
   Multiple Roots and Multiple Routes
   Crisscrossing With Love
   Care, *Chung* and *Karuna*
   Crisscrossing and Cross-firing

2

Root work and Route Work
Footwork and Memory Work
Weaving threads
Amidst threats
Dancing in front of terror
Dancing with terrorists
Meditating with threats
Meditating with threads
Meditating with Roots and Routes
Root Meditation
Route Meditation
Memory Work as Meditating with Earth
Dancing with Soul, Cultures and Cosmos

[UNPAR Guest House, Bandung, Feb. 13, 2015 9 a.m.; updated in Guwahati on July 8, 2015 for the International Conference on Asian Values and Human Futures, Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, July 7–9, 2015].

References

Beck, U., Giddens, A., & Lash, S. (1994). *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Béteille, A. (2002). *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Clammer, J. (1995). *Difference and Modernity: Social Theory and Contemporary Japanese Society*. London: Kegan Paul.

Dussel, E. (2017). Transmodernity and Interculturality: An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation. In *Research as Realization: Science, Spirituality and Harmony*. Delhi: Primus Books.

Giri, A. K. (2006). Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods and the Calling of an Ontological Epistemology of Participation. *Dialectical Anthropology, 30*(1), 227–271.

Giri, A. K. (2012). *Sociology and Beyond: Windows and Horizons*. Jaipur: Rawat Books.

Giri, A. K. (2013a). *Knowledge and Human Liberation: Towards Planetary Realizations*. London: Anthem Press.

Giri, A. K. (2013b). Rethinking Integration. *Sociological Bulletin, 62*(1), 100–109.

Giri, A. K. (Ed.). (2017a). *Pathways of Creative Research: Towards a Festival of Dialogues*. Delhi: Primus.

Giri, A. K. (Ed.). (2017b). *Cultivating Pathways of Creative Research: New Horizons of Transformative Practice and Collaborative Imagination*. Delhi: Primus.

Giri, A. K. (Ed.). (2017c). *Research as Realization: Science, Spirituality and Harmony*. Delhi: Primus.

Habermas, J. (2001). *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Madan, T. N. (2011). M.N. Srinivas: The Man and His Work. In *Sociological Traditions and Perspectives in the Sociology of India* (pp. 174–194). Delhi: Sage Publications.

CHAPTER 2

The Concept of Society: Beyond the Socio-Centric and *Atman*-Centric Predicament

Daya Krishna

Introduction and Invitation

What sort of a thing is society which the social scientist so avidly studies? Is it something completely independent of the way human beings think about it and conceive it to be? Or is it affected in its very being by the way men think about it and conceive it to be? Has it, so to say, an essence of its own which men have only to find and discover? Or is it something like what the existentialists say about man; that is, something that has no essence of its own, but something which is made and created out of the infinite choices of diverse men? What we confront as society is, on this view, not something given by nature but rather that which was created by men in the past and that which is being made and remade by men in the present. It is like the habits of a man's own character, created by choices made in the past, but now confronting him and others as something 'given', something to be taken as 'datum', something to be worked with or worked against, but in any case inevitably to be taken into account.

The analogy with existentialist thought may be carried a step further. To say that society has no essence of its own is not to say that one can make or remake it as one likes, that there are no limits or constraints

D. Krishna (✉)
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_2

within which alone the creative choice may operate and make itself felt. Neither in respect of the human individual nor in respect of human society has the denial of essence ever meant or perhaps could ever mean the absolute absence of all limits and constraints. Not even in art, which is the symbol of all that bespeaks of human creativity at its highest, is there an absence of limit or constraint which has not to be adapted, used and overcome. In fact, there would be little meaning in creative activity if there were no material to be shaped, no resistance to be overcome. The notion of *grenzsituationen*, then, remains as relevant in the case of society as it has been found to be in the case of the individual by existentialist thinkers.

The question 'what is society?', then, seems far more akin to the question 'what is man?' than, say, 'what is nature? 'However much the dichotomy between nature and man may go against our instinct for seeking a unified knowledge and abhorrence of anything but a unitary reality, we cannot but note the radical distinctions between them even with respect to the processes of knowledge. The way we conceive nature does not seem to affect in any significant way the natural processes themselves. Their independence of knowledge is the very condition of the seeking of truth in this realm. But can we say the same with respect to either man or society? Is it really true to say that the way we conceive of man and society does not affect the way they are or the way they have been or even the way they will be? Is not the way we conceive them intimately bound up with what they actually come to be? In case this be the situation to even the least imaginable extent, it would be positively disastrous to foster the illusion that our conceptual activity with respect to these objects can be value-neutral in the same sense as our conceptual activity is supposed to be with respect to natural objects. If it be true in any sense that man and society are deeply affected by the way we conceive them to be, then it is an imperative duty to make ourselves and others aware of the value-implications of our conceptions and hold ourselves responsible for the same.

The distinction between those subject-matters which are affected by the way we think and those which are not is an important one for the cognitive enterprise of man. Even if it be contended that the distinction is only a relative one and that man and society are, in this sense, continuous with that which is studied in the natural sciences, even then the difference between what is only marginal and what is relatively central remains. The essential and inescapable disturbance of the object in the sub-atomic realm by the instruments that seek to observe them, usually described by Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy, is something analogous in the realm of nature to the one we find in the study of man and society also.

Yet, though analogous, it is essentially different in important respects from the one that obtains when man, whether individually or in society, is the object of determination and study. Here, it is not a physical instrument such as a light-ray that makes a difference in the object but the act of consciousness itself. In nuclear physics, until now, no one has argued that it is man's consciousness, his act of trying to know the object, the way he tries to conceive and formulate it that affects the object and introduces an element of indeterminacy to it. In the study of man and society, it is just consciousness itself that makes a difference to that which is the object of knowledge and study. Further, because of this, the difference that is made is basically qualitative rather than quantitative, as in the case of the physical phenomena. Yet the parallel, though differing in certain essential respects, assures us that the said limitation need not stand in the way of a more effective study and knowledge of the phenomenon concerned. The limitation revealed by the Heisenberg principle has not stood in the way of the advance in our knowledge of nuclear phenomena. Similarly, the limitation, if any, in our knowledge of man and society need not prove a hindrance in the progress and pursuit of knowledge in these domains.

Is there, then, a choice in the way we may conceive Society to be? Is this a choice which is not governed solely by considerations of what more easily and adequately conforms to or articulates well the specific object or domain it refers to? Can the possible consequences of a concept relevantly enter into its formulation and be the ground for our preferring it to another? And if we do so, will it be in accordance with the highest rigours of what we have come to regard as the scientific method? These are some of the questions that we have to ponder and find answers for, if we are not to open the floodgates to fancy and prejudice.

Before we do this, however, let us reflect a little on the notion of the adequacy of a concept without any reference to those domains or subject-matters where the concept-forming activity may itself be said to make a difference to what is attempted to be grasped or formulated in the concept. In other words, what makes for the adequacy of a concept? Shall we say that it is the correctness of its reflection of the reality it concerns itself with? Or is it the success of the action based on the pre-supposition that the concept correctly reflects the causal relationships obtaining among phenomena? Or is it just a tool whose adequacy is basically judged by what we want to use it for? Even in the context of cognitive activity, there may be a diversity of concepts with essentially different functions which cooperatively help in leading the activity to a successful conclusion. Whatever

the choice we may make between these and even several other alternatives, at least one characteristic shall be found implicitly or explicitly in them all. This basically consists in their judging the adequacy of a conceptual formulation in terms of its capacity to lead to successful action. But what exactly is the success or failure of action in terms of which the adequacy is to be judged?

The Hindu answer to the question has traditionally been found ultimately to lie in the absence of even the possibility of suffering and/or a state of undisturbed positive bliss. However, even if this or some other version of it be accepted, the question remains as to how this criterion is to be applied to societies rather than individuals. It will be difficult to say that societies are happy or unhappy, and, in any case, the idea of the absence of the possibility of any suffering or rather difficulties in their case seems not only meaningless but also impossible, even if some meaning were to be found for the expressions concerned.

The question, I should like to urge on you, is rather important. We are talking about society and, frankly, what sort of failure would it be that would reveal the falsity of our knowledge of society? False knowledge, let us remember, is causally effective. It positively affects our behaviour and action and leads us in certain directions. It is not like absolute non-being which, because it is such, is supposed to make no difference to the universe as we know it, either in the present or in the future. In fact, as far as man's future is concerned, whether it be individual or collective, the results of false knowledge are perhaps even more important than the results of knowledge deemed to be true. In any case, it is bound to be admitted that the results of false knowledge confront us as recalcitrant facts that shape our destiny in an even more intimate way than the results of true knowledge. Is not the history of individuals, societies and nations full of the past they would wish to get rid of and yet which hangs around their neck like Coleridge's albatross, with perhaps not even the possibility of ultimate release through love or suffering or both. An individual may perhaps gain release through what we can only call transcendent grace, but as far as societies are concerned it is difficult even to conceive as to what release could possibly be.

Falsity of knowledge is supposed to be intimately related to the failure of action. But the failure of action is itself judged in terms of what we want to achieve, and what we want to achieve may be not only multiple in its different directions but also each of these directions may be incompatible with the others. Is it not true that so many times all of us want, as the

saying goes, to have our cake and eat it too? But if this be true, then the failure of action would not, in such a situation, be due to the falsity of knowledge but rather to the nature of what we want to achieve. Could there, then, be such a thing as the falsity of what we want to achieve? If the term 'falsity' seems awkward, would 'adequacy' or 'legitimacy' be more appropriate? In each case, there are bound to be difficulties, but the adoption of 'falsity', I should like to suggest, would ultimately provide a deeper insight into the matter.

The idea that failure of action may be due not only to the falsity of our knowledge but also to the falsity of what we want to achieve deserves some further exploration. Have not we all known the situation where we have achieved what we wanted to achieve and yet remained unfulfilled and dissatisfied? How shall we understand and adequately articulate such a situation? There is nothing wrong with our knowledge, for it has led us to the particular end that we wanted to achieve. Where (then) is the snag? Where have things gone wrong? Have not we got what we wanted? Why, then, do we feel unfulfilled and dissatisfied? Surely, something must have been wrong with what we wanted or, perhaps, with the process of wanting itself. This, at least, was the direction taken by Indian thought. Either one was not wanting what one really ought to have wanted to reach satisfaction or fulfilment in life, or one did not see that 'wanting' was an intrinsically self-defeating process, as it was basically analogous to something like a self-contradictory proposition. It was contended, therefore, that ultimately one could either want only God or a transcendent state of one's own being. The only other alternative to this was to get rid of wanting itself, to destroy the very root from which desire or want sprang again and again. The various schools of classical Hinduism and Buddhism may be distinguished by the relative weight and emphasis they give to these alternatives in their diagnostics of the fundamentally unsatisfactory situation of man, whatever he may think or do.

The search for the criteria related to the falsity of our knowledge about society is important. But even more important is the question about what we would do in terms of knowledge about those realms which are affected by the way we think about them. In these realms, the very act of forming a conception is a valuational act. It is, so to say, a constituent part that enters into the framing of the thing we are thinking about. The conception itself becomes an active ingredient in the forming of the reality in these domains. When Descartes said, '*cogito, ergo sum*', he could easily have added that what I become is what I think myself to be. In the case of

societies the same equation may be said to hold, though with a certain difference. Here, the conception has to be shared or accepted by a significant minority to become effective in the shaping of the reality we call society. Anthropologists have given us a distinction between society and culture and yet it is they who have also made us aware that a society is specifically what it is because of the particular and distinctive culture that it has. Culture is what gives uniqueness to a society and, ultimately, culture is nothing but the way a society conceives itself to be. The diversity of societies is rooted in the diversity of cultures; and the various cultures that anthropologists and historians have studied are distinguished by the differing conceptions of man and society that have been held at different places and times. If any proof were needed for the contention that the way we conceive of man and society affects the type of men and societies we have, a brief look at the *Human Relations Area Files* should suffice for the answer.

The act of conceiving the nature of society is, then, a valuational act. It is not merely a free building of a hypothesis which shall be verified to be true or false by the data about social facts that we encounter in our investigations. Rather, it is a choice and a decision as to which type of society one would like to have. The society may never be shaped in the way one conceives it to be. There may be many reasons for this. One of the most obvious is that it may not be communicated to others, or even if communicated may not reach a sufficient number of people, or even if it reaches it fails to inspire their imagination. The people it reaches may not be significant in terms of causal effectivity, though it may inspire them to be such. But whatever the obstacles, a thinker cannot forswear the responsibility of possibly shaping society in the way he conceives it to be. This itself, therefore, he has to take into account in formulating his conception of society.

The value-neutrality which the cognitive attitude is usually supposed to imply may possibly be safeguarded in such a situation by spelling out the diverse value-perspectives which the different conceptions of society involve. It would be only by giving up the surreptitious claim that the conception of society one is urging is a purely factual one, and by bringing into the open the various value-perspectives involved, that one would do justice to the claim of objectivity which all science involves.

The freedom of conceptual construction is recognized these days by what is known as the 'model-building' activity in the sciences. But this is a freedom through which we are supposed to comprehend a given reality.

However, where the reality is supposed to be affected by the way we conceive it to be, there the freedom is bound to be of a different kind. The freedom, firstly, is a sort of responsible freedom. One cannot just assume for the sake of assuming, for what one assumes has actual consequences which one may not desire or approve of. Secondly, there is, therefore, at least a moral demand for spelling out the value-dimension explicitly. The pose that there is no value-dimension in the conceptual formulations of the social scientist is not only dishonest, but may produce disastrous consequences for himself and others, in that the society increasingly may come to conceive itself as he has conceived it to be and approximate nearer to that conception. The likelihood of this increases in proportion to the agreement about the conception of society that social scientists begin to reach among themselves. The more such an agreement is reached, the more likely it is that people at large conceive society in that way also, and thus help in bringing it into being.

However it be, if once it is admitted that certain sorts of questions may reasonably be asked about society which cannot be so asked with regard to natural objects, then a basic difference in their logical type has to be admitted. We can, for example, reasonably ask ourselves and others about the sort of society we would like to have, a question which seems meaningless when asked with respect to nature. Similarly, exhortations to improve one's society and make it a subject of intelligent moral concern have meaning; while if they were to be made with respect to the world of nature, they would appear nonsensical.

If the distinction between nature and society be once conceded and if it be admitted that the way we conceive society tends to shape society in that direction too, then the necessity for a self-conscious explication of the value-pre-suppositions and the value-consequences of the particular way in which society is proposed to be conceived will have to be admitted by everybody.[1] It would then be an interesting task to delineate, against this background, the various ways in which society has been or can be conceived and the ways in which these diverse conceptions have affected or can affect the shaping of societies.

However interesting and tempting such a take may seem, I do not propose to undertake it here. Rather, I should like to draw your attention to a basic typal difference in the way in which society can be conceived. The only difference that I would like to emphasize here and bring to explicit consciousness for consideration and comment concerns the way in which we ultimately conceive society to be. It may be conceived either as the *last*

term in our thought in terms of which we want to understand everything else or only as an intermediate term beyond which there are other terms to which it is instrumental or subservient in a final sense. In a sense, we live, move and have our being only in and through society. What we think, feel, consider beautiful or ugly, right or wrong is determined by the fact that we are social beings. It is thus conceived as the equivalent of God, and many sociologists think and proclaim it to be so. In fact, God Himself is supposed to be a projected image of society in the mind of the particular individual. On the other hand, it seems difficult to believe that society would show even its specific traits were it not constituted of human individuals who must at least be conceived to have latent possibility in them for engaging in ideal pursuits.

The question 'what is society?' is closely linked to the question 'what is a human individual?' and the one cannot be answered independently of the other. The sociologist is, in a sense, an interested party in the debate. By his training and profession he gradually becomes committed to the ultimacy of society as the last term of human thought, in terms of which everything else is to be understood. He sees everything as rooted in a social nexus and as sub-serving a social end. Whether it be science or religion, art or morality, love or friendship, each is rooted in society and subserves a social function or end. Durkheim is the classic name associated with such a standpoint. But he is not alone, nor even in a minority. Rather, he articulates explicitly what is implicit in the writings of others. Every sociologist subscribes to his dictum, whether implicitly or explicitly. Society is his God, at least professionally.

But however persuasive, it is not necessary. Society need not be conceived as the last term of human thought. The centrality may be restored to the human individual who, then, may be viewed as the nucleus of the social cell from which all creativity emanates and originates. In this perspective, then, society would be conceived as a facilitating mechanism so that the individual may pursue his transsocial ends. Instead of art or religion, friendship or love being seen as lubricating oil for the functioning of the social machine, the machine itself would be seen as facilitating the emergence and pursuit of various values and its efficiency judged in terms of that performance.

The two conceptions are opposed ways of conceiving society, and turn basically on the primacy we give to the individual or society in our thought. As the way we conceive affects the way we become, the choice between the two ways of conceiving becomes a valuational choice also. The

cognitive task in such a situation is to make the value-implications explicit and to spell out the possible achievements and perversions within the ambit of one conception or the other. Ideal-type constructions may be helpful in throwing into bold relief the diverse possibilities involved in the various choices. Similarly if we could find some rough parallels in historical cultures. These have predominantly conceived society in one way rather than another, so it might be helpful in giving a concrete feel to the things we are saying. Keeping both these things in mind, we shall designate the two ultimate contrasts I have sketched above as the Western and the Indian respectively. These give rise to two types of value-achievements, two types of value-perversions and two types of predicaments which we shall try to delineate in the next section. Each society, in this perspective, may be seen as the perversion of a basic value-insight which is apprehended by a few and vulgarly interpreted by the many.

The Two Predicaments

The two ultimate ways in which we can conceive society in relation to the individuals that compose it were delineated in the last section. I also argued that the choice that we make with respect to either of these conceptions profoundly affects the social and individual reality which we may hope to encounter in the future. The decision between the two, is therefore not to be made in terms of their adequacy to reflect some pre-existent reality, but rather in terms of what we want that reality to be. Either choice, in the true human fashion, leads to its own predicament in which it involves the society and the individuals who have opted, consciously or unconsciously, for that conception. No choice, at least for a human being, proves an unmixed blessing. It shall be our attempt in this section to explore the two predicaments generated by the two choices and, for purposes of illustration, we shall use the examples from the Ideal Type schematizations known as Western and Indian cultures which also correspond to a great extent to the actual historical cultures.

The view which conceives of society as the last term of our thought in terms of which and for which everything else is to be understood gives rise to what I have elsewhere called 'the socio-centric predicament' (see note below). The predicament primarily results from viewing the human individual as having nothing in himself that he does not owe to society and, therefore, of seeking the justification for each of his acts in terms of its social consequences. The individual is basically defined in this perspective as a

social animal. He achieves his humanity only through the social and cultural tradition in which he grows and which alone makes of him a human being as distinct from a biological animal. Man's humanity is thus seen as derived from his sociality, and it is the process of socialization which really humanizes him in the strict sense of the term. Further, the individual is seen as something ephemeral which comes into being and passes away. What endures is the society of which he is a member. He has become what he is because of the society into which he happened to be born or reared, and what survives of him is what he has left to the society that endures after he is dead and gone.

The socio-centric perspective which makes man conceive of himself and society in this way leads to the socio-centric predicament in that the individual who is supposed to have nothing in himself which is not derived from society is simultaneously supposed to be burdened with the absolute responsibility for all that happens to society also. The Greek, the Christian and the Communist versions are merely variations on this one theme, which lies at the heart of Western culture. Man is essentially and intrinsically responsible not just for his own self but for others, and this not because he is free and his actions have consequences for others, but because he is social or communal at the very heart of his being and cannot be conceived as apart from them. It is Adam's sin that Christ has to redeem. But Christ, at least, was the son of God. Not so in the vision of Marx. There, it is man conditioned by the society and the class into which he is born who is expected to usher in the reign of freedom and hold himself responsible if he does not do so. For man to have such a burden of others' actions on his shoulders is certainly to develop a sense of community, but it is a community more in guilt than in redemption. Christ, it is true, is supposed to have redeemed humanity by his supreme sacrifice on the Cross and thus proved the community in redemption also. But, firstly, the humanity which is supposed to have been redeemed by Christ's sacrifice is basically confined to the circle of those who have faith in Christ and, secondly, even after the supposed redemption of' the faithful it is more the original sin which weighs on the individual and collective consciousness of the West than the freedom from that guilt which redemption presumably must have provided.

The idea that one can be responsible for actions which have not been done by one's own self and that one can be redeemed by an action done by somebody else may seem positively outrageous to a sensibility which feels the individual as essentially apart from the relationship with others in

which he may happen to be accidentally involved. The doctrine of karma in traditional Hindu thought primarily reflects this basic pre-supposition that it would be an immoral world indeed if one were to reap the fruits of someone else's actions. The monadic morality of the Hindu is thus conceived in an essentially asocial manner. It does not derive from another-centred consciousness in which the consequences of one's actions on others are the subject of one's focus of attention. Rather, it is the consequences of one's action upon oneself which provide the main grounding of morality in Hindu thought and thus pave the way for a very different kind of perspective on the whole issue of action and one's relations with others. At the deepest level, not merely what one does has consequences upon oneself but, conversely, whatever happens to one could only be the result of one's own actions. Not only do one's own actions have consequences on oneself but, if the world is to be a moral world, nothing else could.

The socio-centric perspective, which the predominant Western tradition may be said to exemplify to a great extent, may thus be contrasted with what, for want of a better word, may be called the Atman-centric perspective, which finds its most persistent and effective exemplification in what is known as Hindu civilization and culture. The two perspectives are, basically, two ways of conceiving society, and each of them once formulated and accepted by a significant minority tends to shape the particular society in that direction also. The two perspectives, to the extent that they become actualized, give rise in their turn to two fundamental predicaments which may also respectively be called the socio-centric and the Atman-centric predicaments.

The relation of the foundational guilt-consciousness as exemplified in the Christian and Marxist variations of the Western culture to the socio-centric predicament, though logically understandable, has yet been found to be empirically contingent. The Greek, Judaic and Islamic cultures, though essentially socio-centric in their natures, do not display any essential guilt-consciousness according to those who have closely studied them. It is supposed to be impossible for a person to be a real Muslim without being the member of a Muslim community. If Plato is to be believed, Socrates refused to get out of the prison even when he was convinced that his imprisonment was unjust and that there was a danger to his life, because it might have endangered the laws of the society of which he was a member and on which, according to him, society ultimately rested. The Jews, of course, believe themselves to be a chosen race, and though one can become a Jew, Judaism as a religion is not very missionary in character.

The Greeks were pagans; but Judaism and Islam both subscribe to the Old Testament and thus to the doctrine of Original Sin, which implicates all humanity in a collective guilt. It seems surprising, therefore, that they do not suffer from the sense of guilt to the same extent as the Christians. The reasons for such a state of affairs, if it actually obtains, need investigation. But it is not our task to undertake that here. Whatever be the internal differences between these various cultures, they are all basically socio-centric in character. The Christian and the Communist among them have carried the logic to its extreme and thus exposed it to the predicaments and paradoxes which are only half-hidden in the other traditions. But the Christian still has a soul which, though essentially involved with others, is yet supposed to have an independent relation to God through the Church, which ensures it at least some sort of privacy and individuality which is missing in the Communist vision. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not so much an exercise in fictitious imagination as the complete working out of the logic of the socio-centric view about man and society. The completely secularized view of man as a social animal divested of all the trappings of a transcendental faith reduces man essentially to what society makes him to be and, at another level, to what it *permits* him to be.

Against this, in the other perspective, man is seen basically as a transcendent being. His sociality is only an accidental feature which no more defines him than, say, his erect posture. He is the son of God or, perhaps, the God himself. When Aristotle said that outside society one is either a God or a beast, he was not giving alternatives which would create any dilemma for the Atman-centric thinker. Man is obviously not a beast, and if sociality is to be accidental then he must be a god—and so he is in spite of all appearances to the contrary. Parenthetically, it may be added that some animals are supposed to be essentially social; for example, the ants and the bees.

However it be, society is ultimately secondary in this perspective. Man is essentially asocial or rather transsocial in nature. The relationship with the other which is the heart of sociality is, thus, secondary also. The issue, thus, is not between what Martin Buber in his felicitous phrase has called the 'I–Thou' and the 'I–It' relationships. Rather, it is between these two on the one side and what can perhaps only be called the 'I–I' relationship. The two 'I's' in the equation are at one level the empirical and the transcendental self, the two birds which the *Upanisads* refer to. At another level, they may be conceived as referring to self-as-the-subject and the self-as-the-object and the relationship between the two. At still another

level, the problem may be posed in terms of the *identity* of a being which is essentially conscious or, rather, the identity of consciousness itself. But in whatever way we conceive it, and the three are closely related to each other, the central focus remains on the relation of the self with itself and not with what constitutes the other.

With the devaluation of the relation to the other, the whole realm of the moral, which is essentially constituted through the consciousness of one's obligations to others, also gets devalued. At best, it is seen as a *means* for the realization of the higher and the deeper obligation to one's own self. At worst, it is seen as a hindrance in the way of the realization of one's obligation to one's own self. Society, in an equivalent manner, is seen either as a facilitating instrument for the pursuit of man's asocial or trans-social ends or as an obstruction to the realization of one's transcendence from an essentially other-centred or socio-centric consciousness. The other, even when he happens to be a person, is, after all, an object that takes one away from one's own self. At the lower egoistic level, this is known to everybody, but that this is so at the higher Atman-centric level is the subject of active awareness only among a few. The conflict between the egoistic and the moral consciousness is a common property among all who have achieved any level of self-conscious awareness at all. But the conflict between the moral and the spiritual consciousness is known only to those who have heard the call of the transcendent spirit. Buddha leaving his wife, child and kingdom may be taken as the paradigmatic example of such a situation. The world of social, political and familial obligations is given up at the call of something which the individual cannot clearly formulate even to himself. What is clear is the dissatisfaction which one has with one's own state of affairs and not what one actually wants or what one is going to get by the giving up of such obligations.

The contrast between the moral and the spiritual has been effectively drawn in the context of the Western tradition by Kierkegaard. Abraham sacrificing his son at the command of God is given as the classic example of such a conflict. But at least two things should be noted in respect of this example. First, the conflict here is not between one's obligation to others and the obligation to one's own self. Instead, it is between obligations to others; the others being in this case 'son' and 'God' respectively. The example, therefore, does not, as Kierkegaard claims in his *Fear and Trembling*, illustrate 'the suspension of the ethical' but remains within the domain of the ethical itself. Secondly, the concept of the 'spiritual' reflected in this example would seem very strange to anyone steeped in the Hindu tradition.

The 'spiritual' basically concerns a state of one's own being, and even where it denotes relation to God or a supreme being, the relation conceived is one of contemplation rather than obedience, submission and action.

In a sense, even Buddha's example has elements which would be deviant from the ideally constructible Hindu example for such a situation. In the traditional story, Buddha is led to renounce the worldly obligations by the sight of something outside his own self. It is the sight of suffering, old age and death which makes him leave the world, and not any dissatisfaction with his own psychically lived life. The Hindu, on the other hand, would have or at least should have renounced not because of any concern with the specific condition of some *other* human being but because of some condition of his own life. Similarly, Buddha's return to save suffering humanity, to show it the way and to set in motion the wheel of dharma, is non-Hindu in character. So also is the vow of seeking refuge in the religious community called the *sangh*. It may, perhaps, have been these features of Buddhism which did not appeal to the traditional Hindu psyche and thus led to its complete elimination from the land of its birth.

Society, in the Atman-centric perspective, therefore, is seen only as a midway term of thought and not as the last term in terms of which everything else is to be understood and justified. It does help a 'person to get away from his ego-centred consciousness, which is always concerned with the satisfaction of petty personal desires. As against this, one moves towards an awareness of obligations to others and towards the sustaining of those institutional mechanisms which make human living possible. This is the realm which is classically denoted by the concept of dharma in Hindu thought. This is the moral realm par excellence, the realm which is constituted by the notion of debt or the owing of an obligation to others. The others, in the Hindu tradition, include not only persons, but ancestors, gods, plants, animals, earth, sky and so forth. The concept is wide enough to include all realms where the other happens to be an empirical other with whom one can enter into a relationship.

But, however important, it is rooted basically in man's empiricality and thus has to be transcended through an essential withdrawal and detachment from others and society. The road is through society, but it does not end there as in the other perspective. Also, if one can circumvent it in the sense that one is not naturally ego-centred and that the pull of the transcendent is too great for one's engaging in the fulfilment of the usual obligations to others, then there is nothing wrong in one's doing so. To put it another way, one need not take the road if one can jump it or if there are other short cuts available to reach the other side of the road. In any

case, society is not to be the object of perpetual concern in the sense that man's ultimate realization is not to be through it but apart from it. The concern, therefore, if any, has to be only minimal in character.

The Hindu hierarchy of values, especially in the Atman-centric tradition, thus devalues the realm of the social and the moral. Along with it goes the devaluation of the objective and the external in the usual sense of the terms. The ranking is most pithily expressed in the classical saying that 'For the sake of the transcendent self, one should give up the whole world' (*Ātmārthe prithvīm tyajet*). The world obviously means the whole network of social, moral and political obligations as well as the world of things that are instrumental to the satisfaction of one's biological needs. This whole world, it is recommended, ought to be given up for the sake of the transcendent self, about which it is as meaningless to say that it is mine as that it is someone else's. The admonition, further, in the classical saying, comes at the end of a series of 'oughts', which suggest that the obligations to a lesser whole, such as the family, clan or village, are to be sacrificed for the sake of a wider and higher totality, such as the country or the whole of humanity itself. The obvious implication, therefore, is that the transcendent self is not only the highest but also the widest in the sense that it is basically not characterizable in terms of spatial or temporal characteristics at all.

The concern for the human other which is the heart of the moral situation thus gets minimized into leaving the other to work out his own fate or to help him only to the extent he can be made to realize his own transcendence also. The idea of *avatāra* in Hinduism and the ideal of *bodhisattva* in Buddhism seem obvious exceptions to what we have been trying to characterize as the Ātman-centric tradition in India. Similarly, the *bhakti* tradition is different from the conception of *moksa*, which is not that of a community of selves as in Christianity or Islam. There may, perhaps, be some influence of Christianity and Islamic Sufism in the rise of these conceptions, though an independent, indigenous origin need not be entirely discounted either. Contacts with Greek culture and the Middle Eastern religions occurred very early in the growth of Hindu civilization and an early sect of Christianity reached the southern shores of India much earlier than the *Alvāras* who have been considered the early precursors of the devotional movement that later swept most of northern and eastern India. Furthermore, there is no reason why every form that the human spirit has taken in its religious quest may not be found in every long-enduring historical culture in some recessive form or another. Whatever be the explanation of those strands of Hindu culture which, however grudgingly, accept the concept of a community of selves in essential interrelation either

with one another or with God, the eloquent fact remains that they are felt by all to be in need of some explanation or other. If it was the normal and the natural strand, no such need would have been felt and nor would any explanation have been called for. But it is only because the most significant, distinctive and dominant trend of Hindu thought has turned in the other direction that we feel the need of such explanations. Against both the Chinese and the Greek assertions during what Jaspers has called 'the Axial Age of human history', the Indian asserted the essential asociality and transsociality of man. Translated into spiritual terms, it was the essential relatedness of the self to itself as in *Sānkhya* or its being bereft of even this relation as in *Advaita Vedānta* that was the central assertion. The attempts at relatedness to God as in the *bhakti* schools or to *shakti* as in the tantras did try to move towards some sort of relatedness to the other, but this too was conceived in terms of the enjoyment of a state of consciousness-in-relationship which was hardly conducive to the growth of moral consciousness leading to action in terms of obligations to the other. God himself became a person with whom an affective–emotional relation was to be cultivated and enjoyed and not someone from whom commands and laws emanated.

The devaluation and relegation to secondary place of man's relationship to the embodied other with all its attendant obligations in the world of action is bound to result in a weakening of society, especially in its encounter with others who are not so oriented; just as, on another plane, if people get too much occupied with achieving states of hedonic or aesthetic consciousness, society grows progressively incapable of meeting challenges from others which are more socio-centred and extrovert in nature. The Ātman-centricity leads a people's attention away from an active concern with society and its betterment as much as the consciousness which is centred on the enjoyment of its own hedonic or aesthetic states. When a society's best brains are concerned with the pursuit of something which is essentially asocial or transsocial and which requires an active withdrawal from the institutions that sustain it, then the road is prepared for the inevitable takeover either by those who are interested only in their own gain or by those who are bent on transforming the world in the image of their own good. The immoralists from within and the messiahs from without rule the social realm alternately after the Ātman-centricists have withdrawn into their own pursuit of the transsocial reality.

There is a sort of Gresham's law in human affairs which may be formulated in terms of the tendency of evil to drive out the good. It is not only the bad money that drives out the good, but also bad people who tend to

drive out the good. The intrinsically good have a natural impulse to withdraw from the social world, as the most meaningful things are usually realized outside it. If the impulse gets the sanction and the support of a whole culture, then the countervailing forces give way and we have the spectacle of a society internally governed by the hedonism of the *kāma-sūtras* and the a-moralism of the *arth-śāstras*. After that it does not take too long for it to be conquered, if there are any extrovert and socio-centric people around.

The two predicaments, then, derive from the two ways in which the relation between society and individual can be conceived. Each of the ways affects profoundly the direction in which a society, which conceives of itself in that way, moves and develops. Each in its own turn casts a dark shadow which grows larger and thicker and longer the more it develops nearer the actualization of the way it conceives itself to be.

To be aware of the predicaments, however, is to feel the challenge of avoiding them, if possible. Is it really possible to avoid them, even if we desire to do so? Perhaps the shadow will always be with us; perhaps the negative is woven into the very structure of life. But even if this were so, it would equally remain a fact that the belief in the possibility of getting rid of the shadow is pre-supposed by all human action in some form or other. Yet, human action, in its own turn, is profoundly influenced by the way we conceive human reality to be, The way we think about action and the place it occupies or rather ought to occupy in individual and social life affects profoundly the way individuals and societies seek or turn away from action. A reflection on action and a delineation of its different dimensions and typal directions is, therefore, a necessary step in our quest for avoiding the shadow, if possible.

[It has been contended by some that the very way in which nature is conceived of has usually been the result of the way a society has been conceived of. (See especially Hans Kelson, *Society and Nature*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1946.) However true in some cases, the possible divergence between the two would hardly be denied.]

Note

1. Considerations Towards a Theory of Social Change, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965.

CHAPTER 3

Beyond Sociology: Cultivating an Ontological Epistemology of Participation

Ananta Kumar Giri

Introduction and Invitation

Sociology is part of the agenda of modernity which privileges epistemology to the neglect of ontological issues. In the modernist mode, sociology was considered only an epistemic project, a project of knowing about the world with proper procedure and scientific method and neglected issues of consciousness, self, relationship of subject and object and ontological issues of self-nurturance and self-transformation.[1] The neglect of ontology is a crucial gap in modernistic sociology which continues to persist even in contemporary new formulations such as cosmopolitan sociology, offered by Ulrich Beck. For Beck, sociology needs to move from methodological nationalism to methodological cosmopolitanism. But this move is primarily

This is the revised version of a paper presented at the session, "Beyond Sociology," 37th World Congress of Sociology, Stockholm, July 5. The present work builds upon my decade-long work on the subject and my essay, "Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods and the Calling of an Ontological Epistemology of Participation," Dialectical Anthropology 30: 227–271, 2006.

A.K. Giri (✉)
Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_3

methodological and epistemic and does not address the ontological preparation needed for the transformation of sociology from its contemporary binding in nation-state to a cosmopolitan one. This needs a new self-conception on the part of sociologists, not only as citizens of the nation-state but also as citizens of the world and children of Mother Earth. The later self-conception calls for not only reiteration of self-identity as sociologically constituted but also transcendentally nurtured, urging both the sociologists as well as all human beings to realize that they are not only role occupants but also transcendental selves living in varieties of communities but at the same time transcending these (more on this later).

In this context, the present chapter is an initial striving to transform sociological engagement as simultaneously ontological and epistemological. It seeks to go beyond the epistemic privileging and ontological neglect of much of modernistic sociology and seeks to transform sociological engagement as a field of ontological epistemology of participation. It builds upon creative efforts in this field from sociology, anthropology and philosophy.

Sociology and Beyond: Rethinking Society and the Calling of an Ontological Sociality

Beyond sociology involves a reconceptualization of society and subjectivity, and an important task here is to understand what can be called the work of ontological sociality in self, culture and society. One important challenge here is to go beyond the false dichotomy between individual and society. As Norbert Elias tells us: "We have the familiar concepts of 'individual' and 'society', the first of which refers to a single human being as if he or she were an entity existing in complete isolation […] Society is understood either as a mere accumulation, an additive and unstructured collection of many individual people, or as an object existing beyond individuals and incapable of further explanation […] the words available to us, the concepts which decisively influence the thought and action of people growing up within their sphere, make it appear as if the single human being, labelled the individual, and the plurality of people conceived as society, were two ontologically different entities" (Elias 1991: i). For Elias, "[…] the individual person is able to say 'I' because he can at the same time say 'we.' Thus society consists of a simultaneously I and we but the balance between them has changed historically" (ibid.: 61). It is the "I"

dimension which seems to be getting more primacy and attention in modern and late modern societies, which Zygmunt Bauman calls individualized society (Bauman 2001). In such societies there is a recognition of the limits of the social in many spheres of life, such as education, love and ethics (cf. Beck 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). The ideal of society is now being foundationally rethought as providing a space for self-development of individuals. For example, Andre Gorz (1999) argues that educative relation is not just a social relation.[2] Similarly ethics is not just acting in accordance with social conventions but acting in accordance with post-conventional awareness and realizations where, as Habermas says, conventional norms of society turn out to be "instances of problematic justice" (Habermas 1990: 108). Morality is not just obeying a pre-given command by either society or a benevolent dictator or a wise master but acting according to one's conscience (Giri 1998). It is probably for this reason that Touraine writes in his recently provocatively titled essay "Sociology after Sociology:"

> One of the main themes of sociology is therefore the reversal of the conception and role of institutions. These were defined by their function in the integration of a social system. They defined and imposed respect for the norms and instruments for the defense of individuals which enable them to defend themselves against norms. Our society is less and less a society of the subjected and more and more a society of volunteers. (Touraine 2007: 191)

The field of society is also a work of ontological sociality, which is not confined only to contemporary late modern or individualized societies. It is a reality and possibility in all kinds of societies, though degrees may vary (cf. Touraine 2000). In this context what Michael Freitag writes deserves our careful consideration: "Contrary to a misguided reading of Max Weber's well-known texts, the ontological aspect—the immanent normativity of human/social and historical being is primary, and an understanding of it involves another break with the Weberian heritage: the idea of an ontological reciprocity of individual and society should replace methodological individualism" (Freitag 2001: 2). But acknowledging the ontological aspect of society does not mean only acknowledging its normative dimension but also its "subjective existence" (ibid.). In recent social experience this ontological dimension of society—creativity of self, return of the actor and self-production of society—comes into play in the work of

varieties of social movements. Some scholars suggest that in social movements we get a glimpse of the pathways of an alternative sociality which can be called ontological sociality, the basic ontological relationship characterized by interpretative action. As Martin Fuchs argues: "Humans not only refer to their self and their social environment, the sociality or polity they live in but the world as a […] latent 'surplus of meaning', as exceeding. The basic (ontological) relationship would be interpretative action. This broadens the reference of human action and interpretation or, rather, transcends the idea of a specific referent […] Instead of seeing subjectivity as constitutive of the world […we have to see it] as open to the world" (Fuchs 2004).

There is now a recognition of an ontological dimension in varieties of life and disciplines. For example, in so far as the domain of economy and the field of economics is concerned, Irene van Staveren tells us: "[…] There is a methodological alternative to the utilitarian paradigm of economics to be found in ontology" (van Staveren 2001: 86). Like Freitag's discussion of ontological reciprocity in sociology pointing to the normative and subjective dimensions of self and society, in van Staveren, an ontological approach to economics urges us to understand the value-commitments of actors. An ontological approach to economics relies on people's value commitments but these values should not be understood as only utility maximization or profit maximization but reflect values of justice and care, and these values should not be understood through "the dualistic methodology of mainstream economics, separating values from economic behaviour" (ibid.). In her outline of an alternative economic methodology (an ontological methodology for economics grounded on human values) and conceptualization of economics as concerned with provisioning rather than exchange, van Staveren builds on Aristotle but reformulates the essentialist traces of an Aristotelian ontology in the direction of movement and pluralism.

For van Staveren, economic actors have plural value commitments of freedom, justice and care. So far the ontology of economics has been narrowly defined in terms of freedom, market and exchange, but for van Staveren we should acknowledge that the domains of justice and care are also integral parts of the reality of economic life. These domains of the economy are autonomous yet interdependent, and what is helpful for us to realize is that there is a non-instrumental relationship between them. What van Staveren writes can open new vistas of imagination in our

methodological engagement: "[…] in an economic ontology grounded in human values, economic value domains are interdependent but not instrumentally related. Each domain functions on its own terms but at the same time it is a precondition for the functioning of other domains, without being instrumental" (ibid.: 98).

We also get glimpses of an ontological sociality going beyond subject–object dualism in classical formulations of society. For example, building on both Indian and Greek traditions, philosopher Binod Kumar Agarwala (2004) tells us that play was central to Greek and Vedic imagination of society. Central to the practice of play is that the actor or subject loses himself in the play. Furthermore, "The mode of being of *lila* [play] does not permit the *jiva* [person] to behave towards the *lila* as to an object"; "the self-understanding of *jiva* is inevitably involved in understanding of *lila* in such a way that the medium is not differentiated from it" (Agarwala 2004: 263). This suggests an ontology and epistemology of participation which are important components of a creative social research, but Agarwala urges us to be open towards the dimension of beyond or transcendence in this ontology and epistemology of participation. Self-consciousness here cannot be completely dissolved into self-knowledge: "*There is always a remainder, an excess of what we are beyond what we know of ourselves*" (ibid.: emphasis added).

Rethinking Society: Some Further Considerations

The perspective of ontological sociality helps us rethink society in a foundational way, which can be understood in conjunction with other recent efforts. For example, many contemporary sociologists point to the need for thinking about sociology beyond society. John Urry and Karin Knorr-Cetina point to this, which has a much wider currency than acknowledged by anxiety-stricken sociologists of our times.[3] Writes John Urry in his *Sociology Beyond Societies*: "New rules of sociological method are necessitated by the apparently declining power of national societies (whether or not we do in fact live in a global society), since it was these societies that had provided the social context for sociological study until the present" (Urry 2000: 1–2). Urry looks at the emergence of "natural-social" hybrids for contemporary citizenship and explores whether "notions of chaos and complexity" can assist in the "elaboration of a 'sociology beyond societies'" (ibid.: 190).

Social theorist and sociologist of science Karin Knorr-Cetina takes this exploration of a sociology beyond society to inspiring height and depth. Writes Knorr-Cetina in her provocatively titled essay, "Postsocial relations: Theorizing Society in a Postsocial Environment": "Sociality is very likely a permanent feature of human life. But the focus of sociality are nonetheless changing—in conjunction with concrete historical developments" (Knorr-Cetina 2001: 521). And one of the most important aspects of the contemporary development is "the loss of social imagination, the slow erosion of the belief in salvation by society" (ibid.: 523). The post-social environment today not only consists of subject-centered imagination but also objects and the non-human world, which challenges us to go beyond anthropocentrism. These lines from Knorr-Cetina (2001: 520) deserve our careful attention from the point of view of overcoming the tight grip of anthropocentrism in our thinking:

> […] we take it for granted that social reality is the world of human affairs, exclusively […] Luckman raised the issue from a phenomenological perspective arguing that the boundary we see between the human social and the non-human, non-social was not an essential structure of the life-world. One reason for this was that our sense of humanness itself is not an original or universal projection but arises from revisions and modifications of other distinctions, for example that between living and non-living beings.

For Knorr-Cetina, in contemporary consumer culture and society we find that social reality consists not only of subjects but also objects. Living in this reality leads to the emergence of a new self: the self as a structure of wanting and the shift from "the inner censor to the mirror image self." Knorr-Cetina writes, building on her dialogue with George Herbert Mead and Jacques Lacan: "The lack-wanting system describes contemporary selves better than the I-you-me system" (ibid.: 527). Here self is characterized by wanting, and though in contemporary consumer culture individuals want fulfillment in having more objects, this object-centered consumption may not be our destiny—and our structure of wanting has the potential to make us a seeker of a more authentic solidarity, with an intimate relation with self, other, Nature and God. The task here is to realize the challenge of an emergent subjectivity and what Foucault writes vis-à-vis Nietzsche: "For Nietzsche, the death of God signifies the end of metaphysics, but God is not replaced by man,

and the space remains empty" (quoted in Carretto 1999: 85; see also Uberoi 2002; Bhaskar 2002a, b).

In Knorr-Cetina's insightful formulation, solidarity is central to a post-social sociality, but solidarity here is not entrapped in a logic of nation-state and society and carries the signature of an ontological sociality. Post-social sociality also calls for a new epistemology of participation. She writes : "[…] we can do less without positioning ourselves on the object's side when the object is non-human than when it is human […] The process of position-taking involves the subject's 'becoming the object,' a sort of cross-over through which the subject attempts to see the object world from inside, to 'think' as it does, and to feel its reactions. In the words of a biologist, 'if you want to really understand about a tumour, you've got to be a tumour" (ibid.: 531).

But such an ontology and epistemology of participation calls for overcoming not only anthropocentrism but also egoism. What is interesting is that such a calling seems to be articulated now by scholars with a Marxist background. In his presidential address to the World Congress of Sociology, "The Heritage of Sociology, the Promise of Social Science," Wallerstein writes: "Human arrogance has been humanity's greatest self-imposed limitation. […] In all these arrogances we have betrayed first of all ourselves, and closed off our potential" (Wallerstein 1999: 250). He transforms the whole logic of familiar sociological discourse when he talks about cosmic creativity, which prepares the ground for the far deeper radical proposals of thinkers such as Roy Bhaskar, who talks about cosmic envelope and transcendental identification: "We live in an uncertain cosmos, whose single greatest merit is the permanence of […] uncertainty, because it is this uncertainty that makes possible creativity—Cosmic Creativity, and with that of course human creativity" (ibid.).

In the same essay, Wallerstein presents sociology six challenges: "(a) the challenge of rethinking rationality; (b) the challenge of overcoming its initial Eurocentric bias; (c) rethinking time and temporality; (d) reckoning with complexities and uncertainties; (e) coming to terms with feminist challenges not only in social relations but also in epistemology and questioning objectivity in not only social sciences but also in natural science"; and finally "rethinking modernity by acknowledging that modernity, the centrepiece of all our work, has never really existed" (ibid.: 241), which urges us to realize that the relations between self, other and the world can

be more meaningfully imagined and lived than what has been achieved under the regime of European modernity (Uberoi 2002).

Out of these challenges, we can elaborate the challenge of rethinking rationality and universality as a starting point of a multi-dimensional foundational rethinking of the very category of society itself. Our conception of society in sociology suffers from a "myth of rationality" and "myth of stability" (cf. Toulmin 2001). But society is not only the ground of the rational; it is also the base of much irrational and also the ground for supra-rational aspirations, as Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo from their very different positions would urge us to understand (Connolly 2002; Giri 2004a). And in so far as universality is concerned, there is a dimension of universality as a reality as well as a possibility in particular cultures that calls us to transcend the dichotomy between universalism and particularism and understand the work of a contingent universal. Wallerstein et al. (1996) many years ago challenged us to understand the work of "particularistic universalism." This is akin to a relational and perspectival universality articulated by literary theorist Radhakrishnan (2003: 34) which is always in process. In their work on cosmopolitanism, Sheldon Pollock et al. (2000) urge us to understand the similar work of what they call "situated universality,"[4] which is different from an opposition between global and local, universal and particular. Ulrich Beck (2002) in this regard also talks about cosmopolitanism with roots and wings. In rethinking universality, along with perspectives such as situated universality and perspectival universality, we are also enriched by a perspective of dialectical universality recently developed by Roy Bhaskar in his project of a deepened critical realism. For Bhaskar, to rethink universality we must go beyond abstract universality, understand it dialectically and relate universality to "irreducible uniqueness" (Bhaskar 2002b: 122). For him, dialectical universality of particular beings is sustained by "genuine non-duality and relations of identity" (2002b: xxv); "once you describe the world in an abstract universal way as consisting in constant conjunctions of events or actualized empirical uniformities then you put a halt to history" (ibid.: 122). It reflects "ontological monovalence" and a sense of fatalism that the present society is the best of all possible worlds. Instead, "[…] universality had to be understood dialectically—that is universality together with differentiations and mediations, together with geo-historical trajectories, or what I call *rhythmics,* and together with irreducible uniqueness, all of which defines the concrete singularity of every instance, everything that ever occurs. This would mean in concrete terms that the two members of the working class or two members of human race would always have to be

understood in their mediations, that is whether they are women or men, what kind of work they do, and also in terms of their geo-historical trajectories, where they are coming from, their place and past, and where they are going, what their tangential future" (ibid.: 122).

Rethinking Subjectivity

In his introduction to an anthology of contemporary European social thought on rethinking the subject, James D. Faubion argues that while Kant's ontology is that of autonomous subject, which was followed by Durkheim as he reformulated it in terms of making society "the genuine referent of Kant's transcendental subject," contemporary European thinkers go beyond this in offering an ontology of techno-praxis of the "techno-practitioner." For Faubion, the works of Habermas and Bourdieu reflect this shifting subjectivity: "For Habermas, the hallmark of the techno-practitioner is his or her capacity—no longer nominal, but instead the product and profit of all in this world that mankind has learned—at once to recognize, accept, and follow the normative principles immanent in communication. For Bourdieu, the hallmark of techno-practitioner is his or her capacity to play a game, to use his or her material and symbolic resources strategically in order to win a context more or less local in its rule but everywhere the same in its covert end: domination" (Faubion 1995: 14/15).

Rethinking the subject as a techno-practitioner, for Faubion, should remind us of Aristotle to realize its promise and limits. For Faubion, "The Ethics [Nichomachean Ethics of Aristotle] sets the technician to one side; it features only the practitioner. But the practitioner it features is, like those of his lineage, a being neither transcendental nor natural but instead a being constructed, trained, and socialized, a being of acquired competence and acquired habit" (ibid.: 15). But Aristotle would also urge us to understand the limit of the contemporary techno-practitioner in terms of the "ethical formalism" of Habermas and Bourdieu's "perverse teleology" (this is what Faubion himself writes). Aristotle's hallmark is *eudaimonia*—happiness—and the techno-practitioner must not only argue and strategize but embody a striving for *eudaimonia*, a striving which takes her beyond the contemporary models of the subject as coming from Habermas and Bourdieu. Realization of happiness is not a matter of social practice but also of appropriate subjective cultivation; realization of *eudaimonia* also calls for a spiritualization of practice, as we shall shortly see, and also go beyond Aristotle.

Subject as Not Only a Techno-Practitioner But Also a Transcendentally Real Self

Thus rethinking the subject urges us to realize the limits of the model of the techno-practitioner which is closer to the earlier sociological model of *homo sociologicus* presented by Ralph Dahrendorf. Neither the techno-practitioner nor *homo sociologicus* as occupants of social roles exhaust the reality and possibility of the subject (see Cohen 1994; Giri 1998), and it is helpful here also to acknowledge that the subject is a transcendentally real self. Such a deepening and widening of perspective is suggested by Roy Bhaskar. Bhaskar, the pioneer in the movement of critical realism, has now deepened the quest of realism to touch spiritual quest of self-development and social emancipation. Even before his contemporary spiritual deepening of critical realism Bhaskar had posed some foundational challenges to social sciences. For him, in thinking about society we should not commit a collectivist or individualist fallacy as society consists of neither the collective nor the individual but relations. But what is at the core of relationship? For Bhaskar, it is the ideal and practice of identification: what he calls "transcendental identification." Transcendental identification is the work of the transcendentally real self; so in rethinking the subject we have to think of her as also a transcendentally real self and not merely a "techno-practitioner." For Bhaskar, "[…] transcendental identification is absolutely basic to life. This means non-duality is absolutely basic to life" (Bhaskar 2002b: 140). And this "non-duality is not something 'mystical,' not something that depends on any kind of belief or faith, but the necessary condition for our most quotidian states and acts" (ibid.: 261). For Bhaskar (2002b), our ontology has to be "vastly expanded to allow for the possibility for the enfolding layers of being" (ibid.: 16). Parallel to Knorr-Cetina's notion of self as a structure of wanting, Bhaskar refers to absence that affects our ontology and epistemology: "The whole process is really structured by absence: first in the form of incompleteness which initiates it; second it is negativity in the form of contradiction which stimulates the crisis which motivates you to transcend an existing problem field. And, what happens when you are transcending it is that you have a moment of creative discovery which actually cannot be induced or deduced from the existing subject matter; so it comes from the epistemically unknown" (ibid.: 130).

Acknowledging that the subject is also a transcendentally real self urges us to rethink differentiation from a perspective of identification. Bhaskar

takes the discourse and practice of identification to a new depth and height by talking of ground state, cosmic envelope and co-presence. He writes: "When your action is coming from your ground-state you will see no preference for your own development over the development and freedom of any other being in the universe" (ibid.: 148). Bhaskar (ibid.: 248) urges social scientists to be open to these new pathways of connectivity at work in people's lives rather than just be preoccupied with difference:

> The critique of postmodernism involves accepting the emphasis on uniqueness and differentiation without throwing out our concepts of universality and connection. Indeed the ground-state and cosmic envelope are just precisely the concepts we need to understand differentiation within a unity. But these aspects of being, on which all other aspects ultimately depend, are precisely those which through the generalized theory of co-presence, allows us to see that everything is implicitly enfolded or contained and may be brought to consciousness, implicit or explicit, in everything else, so that anything can be traced or manifest in anything else. The world becomes one in which a quasi-magical or generalized (dialectically universalized) synchronicity is potentially capable of being manifest anywhere.

Max Weber spoke about the disenchantment of the world in which the modern scientific world view played an important role. Modern social science took part in this disenchantment of the world, in the process making us unable to live authentically. Now there is a need to go beyond the crisis of European sciences and to live a non-dual life, and through our ontology and epistemology contribute to the experience and making of a reenchanted world where "knowledge of" cannot be dissociated from "knowing with" (cf. Sunder Rajan 1998). Bhaskar urges us to attend to this calling of re-enchantment both as subjects and scientists which involves collapse of "subject-object duality" and "fact-value distinction" (Bhaskar 2002a: xxxvii).[5] For Bhaskar we are all enchanted beings; that is, "bearers of values, meaning and change." He writes: "We are involved as totalities in a world which is enchanted in the sense that it is the bearer of values, of meaning and change. This level of critique also enables us to see that the world consists of emergent totalities…" (ibid.: 247). Bhaskar (ibid.: 257–258)[6] elaborates the dynamics of an expanded ontology as a reflection of and striving towards a dynamically moving reenchanted world:

> […] we perspectivally re-totalise the field, which we all daily experience, and which is plummeting into global crisis, under the categories of transcendence,

> duality and non-duality, in the context of an expanded ontology, in which we not only, as in hitherto critical realism, think being, thing being processually, and as a totality, and as incorporating transformative agency and reflexivity; but also now think being as multi-planar and n-dimensionally generalised, with mental and emotional *sui generis* realities, bound together within a more basic level which is not only beyond thought but beyond sight, which I have called the cosmic envelope; and within this vastly expanded conception of being, and the very extended ontology it necessitates, we now see being as re-enchanted, that is as valuable, meaningful and containing invisible, (more generally unknown and even unmanifest), subtle, mysterious and even magical qualities and connections, which our contemporary sciences know nothing of.

Sociology and Beyond: Sociological Research and Cultivating an Ontological Epistemology of Participation

Rethinking society and subjectivity also calls for rethinking sociological research as a field of ontological epistemological of participation. Research is not just an epistemic activity; it also calls for cultivation of appropriate virtues transgressing the conventional boundaries between epistemology and ontology. As John Greco writes: "Just as virtue theories in ethics try to understand the normative properties of actions in terms of the normative properties of moral agents, virtue theories in epistemology try to understand the normative properties of beliefs in terms of the normative properties of cognitive agents" (Greco 2001: 136). Virtue epistemology makes activities of research "person-based rather than belief-based" (ibid.). While in epistemology there is a move towards "virtue epistemology," in ontology there are moves towards "weak ontology,"[7] as pioneered by Vattimo (1999), "practical ontology" and "critical ontology" as striven towards by Dallmayr (1984, 1987, 1991), and "ontological anthropology" as striven towards by Clammer et al. (2004), which interestingly embodies a "relational epistemology" (Clammer et al. 2004: 17). Vattimo's weak ontology embodies vulnerability, self-emptying (*kenosis*), love and non-violence; similar is Dallmayr's strivings of a practical ontology which touches the height and depth of a practical spirituality. We can bring "virtue epistemology," "weak ontology," "practical ontology," "ontological anthropology" and Bhaskar's expanded ontology or ontology of self-expansion, and nurture the ground for an ontological epistemology of participation.

In an ontological epistemology of participation, there is attentiveness to and interpenetration of both the subjective and the objective, and the whole challenge is to arrive at an objective in spite of our irreducible subjectivity. This calls for a new conception of both the subjective and the objective. As we have suggested, subjective also refers to the dimension of transcendental or non-dual self in the actor/subject/scientist, and this would be a companion for an aspired-to objectivity. As Eric Fromm tells us: "Objectivity does not mean detachment, *it means respect*; that is, the ability not to distort and to falsify things, persons and oneself" (Fromm 1950: 105). Furthermore, "To be objective is possible only if we respect the things we observe; that is, if we are capable of seeing them in their uniqueness and interconnectedness" (ibid.: 104) (Compare this to Bhaskar's perspective of dialectical universality paying attention to uniqueness and singularity.)

Ontological epistemology of participation differs from participant observation as it is conventionally understood. Bourdieu asks of participant observation: "How can one be both subject and object, the one who acts and the one who, as it were, watching himself acting? (Bourdieu 2003: 282). As an alternative Bourdieu proposes *participant objectivation*: "By participant objectivation I mean the objectivation of the subject of objectivation, of the analyzing subject—in short the researcher herself?" (ibid.). But how can one watch oneself acting and be both subject and object? Does it not involve work on oneself or cultivation of some kind of witnessing self, what is called "*sakhi pursusha*" in Indian spiritual traditions or "impartial spectator" by Adam Smith (Smith 1976)? Can this be only epistemic and doesn't it also involve some ontological work on oneself? Bourdieu speaks about "epistemic reflexivity" (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 38). His application of statistical analysis to self-understanding is helpful, but does it also not involve ontological nurturance?[8]

In this context, Ankersmit's most recent discussion of the methodology of historical representation helps us understand the work of ontological epistemology of participation in a new way. He tells us that historical representation of a period may present a "coherent whole of developments on domains that are incommensurable with each other" such as the "cognitive, ethical, aesthetic, religious or technical preoccupations of a period" (Ankersmit 2002: 234). For Ankersmit such a connected picture and free movement "from one domain to another" is possible because of historical representation. He goes on to write: "If we ask ourselves how

representation may enable us to do this, the answer is that *the unique contribution of representation […] is that it involves the knowing subject […] The self is activated by representation in a way that would mean the end of objective knowledge*. And from the point of view recommended by representation, suddenly a common ground can be discerned for domains that seemed hitherto completely unrelated and incommensurable" (ibid.; emphasis added).

Here Ankersmit presents the example of epistemology and politics in seventeenth-century France. For Ankersmit, "at first sight seventeenth-century rationalist philosophy and absolutism will have nothing in common for us. But then the historian may suggest the point of view of the transcendental ego [or it may emerge from any self-initiated historical engagement, not just from historian as a professional expert], of a self that withdraws from the world but in order to get a firmer hold of it" (ibid.). "And this point of view makes us aware of what the Cartesian self, doubting all knowledge in order to gain access to absolute certain knowledge, has in common with Louis XIV withdrawing from the bustle of Paris to Versailles in order to confirm his absolutist mastery of France" (ibid.). Thus the perspective of transcendental ego born of historical inquiry and representation, an engagement in which all of us seeking souls can participate, not only professional historians, helps us understand the connection between epistemology and politics in seventeenth-century France. For Ankersmit, one may not totally identify with such a perspective which emerges from our work of historical representation, but nonetheless it shapes our personality and what we are. From the perspective of the calling of an ontological epistemology of participation, what Ankersmit writes deserves our careful consideration: "Nevertheless, becoming acquainted with the possibility of many such points of view will, add each time, a new, though tiny stone to the mosaic of our personality. And in the end this cannot fail to have its effect on the kind of person that we are" (ibid.: 235).

By the Way of Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the work of ontological sociality in self, culture and society and thus sought to reconstitute society as a field of ontological epistemology of participation. We have also striven to reconstitute sociological research as a practice of ontological epistemology of participation going beyond modernistic privileging of epistemology

and neglect of ontology. Such a new view of sociology and sociological research points to the need for cultivation of an appropriate ontology which can help us come to terms with not only some of the theoretical problems such as the postmodern imprisonment within difference but also realize the practical task of establishing solidarity across divides. Ontological cultivation also includes the challenge of cultivating non-dual modes within ourselves as subjects of investigation. Such an ontological cultivation has an epochal significance, as our theories and methods have been imprisoned within the modernist privileging of epistemology over ontology. Bringing ontological cultivation back to sociology enables us to go beyond the conventional slogan of renewing sociological research with participation. For the last quarter century participatory research has been much valorised—it has been on everybody's lips, from anthropologists to development practitioners, and now the agents of the World Bank. But our approach to and involvement with participatory research has been mostly procedural and instrumental. In this context, we need to think about and practice research in a new way, in an ontological way, where our whole self—not just the inquiring mind—is involved with research. The valorized discourse of participatory research today needs a radical supplement from Gandhi and Heidegger, where research becomes a time and space of laying open oneself and realization of co-being (cf. Dallmayr 1996). The time of research becomes both a time of communication and silence,[9] a time of "lived time," and the space of research becomes a space of dwelling, in fact a "poetics of dwelling," rather than building. Here what Pillai writes about Gandhi's modes of participation in social service from a Heideggerian point of view can be helpful in going beyond an instrumentalist approach to participatory research: "Gandhi's participation in the life of his time was always (at the same time) an interior journey, an exploration of his being, and not just working out of a pre-established strategy.[10] It is this insistent questioning of himself which distinguishes his action from all self-sanctifying 'social service' based on representation. Every decision for Gandhi was simultaneously the laying open of himself" (Pillai 1985: 77).

Bringing ontological cultivation to the discourse and practice of sociology is an important calling of our time. But while embodying ontological cultivation we can proceed in the spirit of a journey and evolution rather than with an essentialist, fixed ontology. Much talk of ontology has in the past suffered from the dangers of essentialism and fixation. But we are not

destined to commit the same errors nor should we valorize ontology to the point of excluding the epistemic activity of learning. A way out of the modernist privileging of epistemology and neglect of ontology is not to valorize ontology at the expense of the epistemic practices of learning and inquiry. Here we can supplement Heidegger with Gandhi, not only in politics but also in epistemology, thus rescuing us from complicity with any politics of mastery in the name of the resoluteness of *Dasein* and making *Dasein* and self an involved and emergent participant in learning (cf. Bourdieu 1991a; Dallmayr 2001b; Srinivasan 1993).[11] One arresting aspect of Gandhi's life and work is his insatiable passion for learning and experiments with truth. At the ripe old age of eighty when he was travelling from village to village and trying to calm the fire of communal violence in riot-torn Noakhali, he was devoting an hour each day to learning the alphabets of the language of the locality, Bengali. It is this passion for learning and self-cultivation which can make us humble and rescue us from the danger of using our knowledge, including the knowledge generated out of our research, as an aid to our will to power—an instrument of authority, including ethnographic authority; it can help us realize that what we need is not so much "self-mastery" as an "ethics of servanthood" and a "pathos of shakenness" (cf. Giri 2002; Shanks 2001). As we transform sociology as a field of ontological epistemology of participation, we have to realize that ontology emerges as much from contestation, conversation and learning as it is an initial participant in self and science. We have to open ontology itself to a journey of homelessness (cf. Dallmayr 2001a) and an epistemic practice of learning, thus crossing the boundaries between ontology and epistemology, a border-crossing which becomes a paradigmatic activity of multiple border-crossing between philosophy and fieldwork, creative research and critical action, self and other, society and cosmos. To sing it with Rabindranath Tagore, the immortal poet of *Gitanjali*: "Life is perpetually creative because it contains in itself that surplus which ever overflows the boundaries of immediate time and space, restlessly pursuing its adventure of expression in the varied forms of self-realization" (Tagore 1961: 45).

Notes

1. As John Clammer writes, "For much conventional sociology, a preoccupation with methodology has driven out any concern with consciousness" (Clammer 2009: 13).

2. Gorz (1999) writes the following about education which embodies a critique of society-centered sociological reasoning and signature of an ontological sociality:

> This can not be *taught*; it has to be *stimulated*. It can arise only out of the affective attachment of children or adolescents to a reference group who makes them *feel* deserving of *unconditional* love, and *confident* of their capacity to learn, act, undertake projects and measure themselves against others—who gives them, in a word "self-esteem." The subject emerges by virtue of the love with which another subject calls it to become a subject and it develops through the desire to be loved by that other subject. This means that the *educative* relation *is not a social relation and is not socializable*.

In this context, what Touraine (2007: 191) writes below also deserves our careful attention:

> The combination of economic participation and cultural identity cannot be realized at the level of society; it is only at the level of the individual that participation in the global economy and the defense or formation of a cultural identity—legacy or new project—can combine. That is why, in both family and school, we are seeing the triumph—despite resistance—of the idea that it is the child or the pupil who must be at the center of the institution. The protracted debates in France between advocates and opponents of the so-called *college unique*, the system in which all students attend the same middle school, lead us to the conclusion that the preservation of the latter is not possible without substantial individualization of the relations between the teachers and the taught.

3. This seems to be the case with Anthony Giddens, whose very title, *In Defence of Sociology*, suggests this anxiety. It is no wonder than that Giddens laments the disappearance of the "capacity of sociology to provide a unifying center for the diverse branches of social research" (Giddens 1996: 2). To be fair to Giddens he is surely not alone: traces of this anxiety are to be found in André Béteille (2002) as well. An anxiety to defend one's discipline is not confined to sociology. Habermas (1990) seems to be worried that one day philosophy may be replaced by cultural anthropology, and Sidney Mintz (2000) is worried about this being replaced by cultural studies.

4. What Pollock et al. write below vis-à-vis their elaboration of what they call as cosmofeminism as an example of situated universalism deserves our careful attention:

> Any cosmofeminine would have to create a critically engaged space that is not just a screen for globalization or an antidote to nationalism but is rather a focus on projects of the intimate sphere conceived as a part of the cosmopolitan. Such a critical perspective would also open up a new understanding of the domestic, which would no longer be confined spatially or socially to the private sphere. This perspective would allow us to recognize that domesticity itself is a vital interlocutor and not just an interloper in law, politics and public ethics. From this reconfigured understanding of the public life of domesticity and intimacy it follows that spheres of intimacy generate legitimate pressure on any understanding of cosmopolitan solidarities and networks. The cosmofeminine could thus be seen as subverting those larger networks that refuse to recognize their own nature as specific systems of relations among others. That is, we would no longer have feminism as the voice of the specificity interrogating the claims of other putative universals. Instead we would have the cosmofeminine *as the sign of an argument for a situated universalism that invites broader debate based on a recognition of their own situatedness.* A focus on this extensional understanding of domesticity and intimacy could *generate a different picture of more public universalisms,* making the domestic sphere subversive of *thin claims to universalism.* (Pollock et al. 2000: 584/585; emphases added)

5. Reenchantment for Bhaskar also involves a "collapse of the distinction between sacred and profane" (Bhaskar 2002b: xxxviii). For him, "Once this distinction goes we can read the spiritual into the structure of everyday life" (ibid.).
6. Bhaskar's subsequent elaboration deserves our careful attention:

> Our task is to re-become non-dual beings in a world of duality, opposition and strife. Freedom is the elimination of the non-dual components within my embodied personality; that is the elimination of everything inconsistent with my ground-state, the cessation of negative incompleteness. In order to do this, I had to experience duality, heteronomy and change, to grow and fulfill my intentionality. When I have fulfilled my intentionality, when I have no more non-me within me, I am one with my ground state, and one with the ground-states of all other beings in the rest of creation too. I am one with the whole of creation; and as such will reflect back to its creator his work, formation, creation,

> will or intentionality; and perfectly reflecting his intentionality, I am one with him too. This is self-realisation, the realisation of the divine ingredient within me […]
> But this is not the end of the odyssey in the world of duality. I am still *positively incomplete,* in so far as other beings are co-present, enfolded within me, are negatively incomplete, that is, unfree. When the whole of creation is self-realized, when it reflects back its own divinity, then and only then will there be *peace*. Even then this peace is only the end of pre-history. I know in the meantime that I will grow and develop while I strive for this goal, a development to which I can see no conceivable end; so if there is an expanded plenitude of possibilities packed into my non-dual being, my agentive self in the world of duality, we cannot even begin to anticipate what possibilities lie within eudemonia. This *eudenomia* is not something removed from ordinary secular speculation…; rather, we have found it everywhere as a presupposition of even the most crude and rudimentary forms of ethics. (ibid.: 261–262)

7. In the words of Vattimo: "We derive an ethics of non-violence from weak ontology, yet we are led to weak thought, from its origin in Heidegger's concern with the metaphysics of objectivity, by the Christian legacy of the rejection of violence at work within us" (Vattimo 1999: 44).
8. This may still be a helpful step despite Bourdieu's own disdain for "the political ontology of Martin Heidegger" (Bourdieu 1991b). A way out is not to be trapped inside the supposedly abominable walls of Heideggerian political ontology and to explore the pathways of spiritual ontologies, taking inspiration, for example, from Dallmayr's (1993) exploration of another Heidegger.
9. Consider here what Niklas Luhman, the sociologist of communication, writes: "[We need] to make a digression at this point and consider whether the participation of consciousness is not perhaps best conceived as a silence" (Luhman 2001: 16).
10. It is also enriching here to read what Dallmayr writes about his own vocation of journey, which takes inspiration from both Gandhi and Heidegger:

> The notion of experience as a journey or of man as *homo viator*, is no longer much in vogue today—having been replaced by the sturdier conceptions of man as fabricator or else as a creative assembler and dissembler of symbolic designs. In invoking or reclaiming the eclipsed notion of a "journey" I wish to dissociate myself, however, from a number of accretions clouding the term. First of all, I do not identify the term with a deliberate venture or project (in a Sartrean or broadly existentialist sense)—irrespective of the deliberative or reflective posture of

> participants. Shunning the planned delights of organized tourism, I prefer to associate the term with unanticipated incidents or adventures which one does not so much charter as undergo. Moreover, journeying in my sense does not basically travelling along a well demarcated route in the direction of a carefully chosen or clearly specified goal. Rather, being properly underway or "abroad" denotes to me also frequenting byways, detours, and uncharted trails—sometimes exploring dead-ends, cul-de-sacs […]. (Dallmayr 1987: 1)

11. It must be noted, however, that in his later seeking Heidegger himself made a shift from his earlier preoccupation with resoluteness. As Dallmayr helps us understand in an original reinterpretation of the Heideggerian pathway: "[…] Heidegger's middle and later writings came to see the pitfalls and streamlining effects of linear power- seeking and to adumbrate a realm beyond power and impotence, domination and submission under the rubric of a 'power-free' (machtlos) dispensation that allows being (s) 'to be' (Dallmayr 2001b: 190).

References

Agarwala, B. (2004). Humanities and Social Sciences in the New Millennium: Theorizing in/for Society as Play. In A. K. Giri (Ed.), *Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods* (pp. 253–272). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Ankersmit, F. (2002). *Historical Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (2000). *The Brave New World of Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (2002). The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies. *Theory, Culture and Society, 19*(1–2), 17–44.

Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995). *The Normal Chaos of Love*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Béteille, A. (2002). *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhaskar, R. (2002a). *Meta-Reality. The Philosophy of Meta-Reality, A Philosophy for the Present. Creativity, Love and Freedom, The Bhaskar Series* (Vol. I). New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage Publications.

Bhaskar, R. (2002b). *Reflections on Meta-Reality: Transcendence, Everyday Life and Emancipations*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Bourdieu, P. (1991a). Epilogue: On the Possibility of a Field of World Sociology. In P. Bourdieu & J. S. Coleman (Eds.), *Social Theory for a Changing Society* (pp. 373–387). Boulder: Westview.

Bourdieu, P. (1991b). *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Peter Collier, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2003). Participant Objectivation. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 9*, 281–294.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Carretto, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Religion and Culture by Michel Foucault*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Clammer, J. (2009). Sociology and Beyond: Towards a Deep Sociology. *Asian Journal of Social Science, 37*(3), 332–346.

Clammer, J., Piorier, S., & Schwimmer, E. (2004). Introduction: The Relevance of Ontologies in Anthropology: Reflections on a New Anthropological Field. In J. Clammer et al. (Eds.), *Figured Worlds: Ontological Obstacles in Intercultural Relations* (pp. 3–22). Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Cohen, A. (1994). *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Connolly, W. (2002). *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dallmayr, F. (1984). *Polis and Praxis: Exercises in Contemporary Political Theory*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Dallmayr, F. (1987). *Critical Encounters: Between Philosophy and Politics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Dallmayr, F. (1991). *Between Freiburg and Frankfurt: Toward a Critical Ontology*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Dallmayr, F. (1993). *The Other Heidegger*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Dallmayr, F. (1996). *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Dallmayr, F. (2001a). *Homelessness and Homecoming: Heidegger on the Road* (Manuscript). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.

Dallmayr, F. (2001b). Resisting Totalizing Uniformity: Marin Heidegger on the *Macht* and *Machenschaft*. In F. Dallmayr (Ed.), *Achieving Our World: Toward a Global and Plural Democracy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Elias, N. (1991). *The Society of Individuals*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Faubion, J. D. (Ed.). (1995). *Rethinking the Subject: An Anthology of Contemporary European Social Theory*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Freitag, M. (2001). The Contemporary Social Sciences and the Problem of Normativity. *Theses Eleven, 65*, 1–25.

Fromm, E. (1950). *Man for Himself*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Fuchs, M. (2004). Articulating the World: Social Movements, the Self-Transcendence of Society and the Question of Culture. In A. K. Giri (Ed.),

Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
Giddens, A. (1996). *In Defense of Sociology: Essays, Interpretations and Rejoinders*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Giri, A. K. (1998). Self, Other and the Challenge of Culture. In *Global Transformations: Postmodernity and Beyond*. Jaipur: Rawat.
Giri, A. K. (2002). *Conversations and Transformations: Toward a New Ethics of Self and Society*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books and Rowman and Littlefield.
Gorz, A. (1999). *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-Based Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Greco, J. (2001). Virtues and Rules in Epistemology. In A. Fairweather & L. Zagzebski (Eds.), *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility* (pp. 117–141). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Habermas, J. (1990). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Knorr-Cetina, K. (2001). Postsocial Relations: Theorizing Society in a Postsocial Environment. In G. Ritzer & B. Smart (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Theory*. London: Sage.
Luhman, N. (2001). Notes on the Project 'Poetry and Social Theory'. *Theory, Culture and Society, 18*(1), 1–13.
Mintz, S. W. (2000). Sow's Ears and Silver Linings: A Backward Look at Ethnography. *Current Anthropology, 41*(2), 169–189.
Pillai, P. V. (1985). Hind Swaraj in the Light of Heidegger's Critique of Modernity. In *Hind Swaraj: A Fresh Look*. Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.
Pollock, S., et al. (2000). Cosmopolitanisms. *Public Culture, 12*(3), 577–589.
Radhakrishnan, R. (2003). *Theory in an Uneven World*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
Shanks, A. (2001). *What Is Truth? Towards a Theological Poetics*. London: Routledge.
Smith, A. (1976). *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Srinivasan, A. (1993). The Subject in Fieldwork: Malinowski and Gandhi. *Economic and Political Weekly, 28*(5).
Sunder Rajan, R. (1998). *Beyond the Crises of European Sciences: New Beginnings*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies.
Tagore, R. (1961). *On Art and Aesthetics*. Calcutta: Orient Longman.
Toulmin, S. (2001). *Return to Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Touraine, A. (2000). *Can We Live Together? Equality and Difference*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Touraine, A. (2007). Sociology After Sociology. *European Journal of Social Theory, 10*(2), 184–193.
Uberoi, J. P. S. (2002). *The European Modernity: Truth, Science and Method*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Urry, J. (2000). *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge.

van Staveren, I. (2001). *The Values of Economics: An Aristotelian Perspective*. London: Routledge.

Vattimo, G. (1999). *Belief*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Wallerstein, I. (1999). *The End of the World as We Know It: Social Science for the Twenty-First Century*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Wallerstein, I., et al. (1996). *Open the Social Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

CHAPTER 4

Deep Sociology

John Clammer

It is perhaps a little risky in a social science book to speak of going "beyond sociology", unless it is understood that this implies the open-minded seeking for new directions in which sociology might go in the new millennium, quite possibly in forms beyond its originary formulations and foundations in Eurocentric and modernist modes of thought. Potentially these new directions might include the recentring of international sociological discourse in Asian social theory—contemporary Confucian, Islamic perhaps and most certainly Buddhist, the latter already showing signs of becoming a serious alternative route to asking radically new questions and questioning the foundations of Western modernist knowledge in ways quite different from those of postmodernist theory (Loy 2003; Clammer 2005), creative ideas emerging from post-development theory, and voices from outside sociology in its institutionalized sense, including from feminism, the ecological movement, art, the new social movements, from the recovery of what anthropologists are calling "indigenous knowledge" and from thinkers important in their own spheres of influence, but entirely marginalized in mainstream sociology (Rudolf Steiner, C.F. Jung, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas and Ken Wilbur to name a few prominent examples. The objective of this chapter is to call into question the

J. Clammer (✉)
O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_4

anthropocentric, dualistic and Cartesian presuppositions of conventional sociology, and to move beyond critical sociology towards a reconstructive sociology in which the discipline becomes a valuable tool in our efforts to respond meaningfully to the challenges of understanding and acting upon the structural and discourse transformations at work in the contemporary world.

The Task of Sociology

Does sociology actually answer the questions that it purports to? This is partly a question of levels, of course: at the level of statistical generalizations sociology has proved quite successful, but beyond that "explanations", the goal of conventional sociology, weaken as they deepen. The primary examples of this, and representing a kind of litmus test for the claims of sociology as a whole, are the subjects of religion, art and suicide. All have attracted a substantial sociological literature, yet little of it is fully satisfying—for example, the paucity and weaknesses of sociological theories of art (Heywood 1997). And while since Durkheim sociologists have struggled with the explanation of suicide, the most insightful and sensitive book that I know of on the subject is the work not of a sociologist, but of a literary critic personally acquainted with this tragic phenomenon through his friendship with the poet Sylvia Plath (Alvarez 1974).

There are, I suggest, a number of reasons for this, which include an unwillingness to confront what are in fact the basic existential questions of human life—death, love, embeddedness in nature, illness and the continuation of the old philosophical error of confusing explanation and understanding, and a commitment to a now very out-of-date model of what sociologists think that the natural sciences do, with a corresponding attachment to a positivistic and reductionist mode of analysis. This is tied to a continuing de facto epistemological Eurocentrism signalled by the failure to take the philosophical dimensions of globalization seriously; while accepting and perhaps celebrating the fact that globalization and its corresponding universalization of knowledge makes an ever bigger range of indigenous knowledges available to all of us, while simultaneously refusing to take them seriously as rivals or alternatives to hegemonic Western "scientific" knowledge, or admitting the possibility that Western sociology and anthropology are, as Marshall Sahlins has argued, simply forms of local knowledge that for historical reasons (imperialism, colonialism and military power being amongst the main ones) have become effectively

universalized, suppressing as a consequence the legitimate alternative local anthropologies and sociologies of other cultures and societies (Sahlins 1996).

Instead, postmodernist theory, posing as a radical critique of modernist high theory, in fact neither questions the fundamental philosophical presuppositions of that theory—for example, its anthropocentrism, nor generates constructive ideas for actually confronting the reality of the emerging global crisis—deepening social inequalities, persistent poverty, resource depletion and ecological meltdown (Myerson 2001). The necessity is to move beyond a simply critical sociology to a reconstructive sociology as a basis for the emergence of social and civilizational alternatives, current civilizational forms clearly having failed to stave off the deepening crises that the Earth community now faces.

Entrapment within the discourse that sociology has created for itself and which is the legacy of its founding fathers may not be a sufficient model for addressing the human, social and ecological problems of the current century. Even as Marxism was a child of and a profound shaper of a now outdated industrial, resource-extractive, polluting and unequal societal order, so too sociology shares in that legacy, and for all its undoubted achievements in throwing light on the organization of human society, now needs rethinking if it is to have any constructive role in the civilization that must arise from the failures of the old order, if humanity and nature are to have a future at all.

Thus: beyond, below and behind the conventional questions of sociology (or the questions of conventional sociology)—issues of class, stratification, deviance, social order and control, lie ultimately the fundamental existential questions—of birth, death, our place in nature, meaning, ends, sleep and dreams, love and suffering—which sociology, having largely severed its roots in philosophy, rarely speaks of. To confront these as the fundamental issues at the heart of existence at all times and in all cultures (however specifically framed or addressed in different instances) poses basic methodological and theoretical questions for the student of the human and social sciences. Given the emerging and challenging features of the world system, ecological and social justice issues paramount amongst them, how do we define the nature and scope of our investigations as contemporary sociologists? And, once defined, how do we interrogate this in ways that truly illuminate the human condition and to act for change where we believe that to be necessary? How do we site sociology, and place it in the context that gives it reality and meaning as an enterprise,

that context in fact being nothing less than the basic and evolutionary forces that shape the cosmos? To do this we have to work paradoxically at both the maximal and minimal levels—at the very micro in the internal worlds of individual memory, imagination, anticipation, hope and purpose, and at the very macro level, not only of the "world system" and its structural qualities, but also of the cosmic context in which all human systems are embedded, including, pre-eminently, nature.

Such an approach must go beyond received categories, and in fact is in large part a reconstruction of those very categories. Some would even argue that it represents a spiritual rather than a purely "scientific" path. In his luminous study of orthodox Jews in contemporary Jerusalem, Samuel Heilman writes: "The competing authorities of my social science were insufficient, their vision flawed by an almost obstinate flight from all truths… One might live *off* sociology and anthropology, but to me it seemed impossible to live *for* them" (Heilman 1984: 22). His study of this religiously orthodox community forced him to the recognition of the necessity of going beyond the arbitrary limits of "objectivity" (itself in fact a social construction), and to consciously enter a *process* in which, through confronting the reality and givenness and indeed otherness of a specific and actual community, the sociologist is confronted with the necessity of in Heilman's terms "reweaving the fabric of our lives". In the conventional social sciences we often find very little but trivial outcomes because we are not really looking for much.

Clearly sociology has always had a critical and self-critical dimension, and indeed has always been a contentious and even undefined discipline (a characteristic that it shares with anthropology). But in most cases it is discourses *within* sociology that are critiqued, not the notion of sociology itself. It has sometimes been pointed out that Asian societies (China being the paradigm case) have rarely spontaneously produced what in the West would be recognized as sociology, and this is seen as some kind of deficiency. But this is a serious mistake: all such societies have rich traditions of social thought, but primarily expressed through philosophical and religious idioms. One of the central errors of Western sociology and hence of the limits of its explanatory power has been the assumption, again largely deriving from Durkheim, of the autonomy of society: of there being in other words a category of phenomena that can be abstracted from and studied independent from its larger existential and natural context. The very recent discovery in the West of a new sub-discipline entitled "environmental sociology" is highly indicative of this, and unwittingly signals

the existence of a concept of society divorced from nature and in which sociological explanations were thought to be autonomous. When, however, one looks at social thought in Japan, China and India, and in particular those forms of thought rooted in Buddhism, Hinduism and to a lesser extent Shinto, a very different conception of human life in the universe begins to emerge.

This broad conception has a number of elements. First, that the fundamental uncertainty of life—its hazards and unpredictability (which has surfaced in Western social thought as the "risk" analyses of Ulrich Beck and Mary Douglas amongst others)—has tended in mainstream sociology to generate "systems" when in fact it should point us back to life itself and to the richness of the present moment. Existence is actually unknowable by analytical means and can only be grasped through other techniques that have not so far appeared in the vocabulary of sociology, including the meditative techniques common to the religious traditions of Asia. Secondly, that the common assumptions of autonomy, independence and individualism that pervade Western thought make no sense from the perspective of Asian social psychologies which stress the interdependence of all entities, at the social level what the Vietnamese Buddhist thinker and activist Thich Nhat Hanh calls "Interbeing" (Thich 1998), and at the ecological level in the recognition of the fundamental embeddedness of humans in nature. The "ecological self" announced by Deep Ecology has in fact long been anticipated in Asian religious traditions. The self is not autonomous—it is the nexus of both socio-cultural forces and natural ones, and the points at which these meet such as in the biological/cultural heritage enshrined and celebrated in the notion of ancestors, so central to East Asian religious and social practices. The recent invention in the West of "ecopsychology" and the recognition of the deep scars that result from the artificial and in fact non-existent radical separation of humans and nature imposed on people by many aspects of our industrial–urban civilization, signals the belated reemergence of a clearer and more modest perception of the place of humans in the cosmos as simply a part in a complex web of life and as not necessarily the apex of evolution. To overcome the illusion of separateness is the first step in a reinvented sociology.

To say this is not to destroy the notion of the social, but to reconceptualize it. The social is necessary because it provides us with an inclusive path, the context of cultural interaction necessary to allow us to be most richly who we should really be. But it is not the only or ultimate context of human life: we are also *bodies* and as such intimately connected to nature

and its biological processes on which we are absolutely dependent, and spirit, requiring that is to say a sense of meaning to our lives and their place in the total cosmos. The recognition of this multi-dimensional quality of human life fundamentally influences our conceptions of sociology and the society that is supposed to describe and understand. As the modern Indian sage Sri Aurobindo puts it in relation to sociology:

> A spiritualized society would treat in its sociology the individual, from the saint to the criminal, not as units of social problems to be passed through some skillfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mode or crushed out of it, but as souls suffering and entangled in a net and to be rescued, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow. The aim of its economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or cooperative kind, but to give to men—not only to some but all men each in his highest possible measure—the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all… And that work would be to find the divine Self in the individual and the collectivity and to realize spiritually, mentally, vitally, materially its greatest, largest, richest and deepest possibilities in the inner life of all and their outer action and nature". (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 241–242)

Expressed here in Neo-Hindu terms is a twofold notion—that the role of sociology is activist in a creative sense, that it is actually the art of assisting society to its highest self-realization, and that, as it were, society is greater than the social, or what Martin Fuchs has termed in more sociological language "The non-identity of society with itself" (Fuchs 2004).

By this is meant that "society" is not an entity, but a process, a continuous self-becoming, an organism that is constantly reinventing itself. The failure to recognize this is reflected not only in the structure of conventional sociology textbooks where the chapter on "social change" is typically added as a kind of afterthought, but in Fuchs's examples, in the treating of social movements as indeed just "movements", rather than as experiments in meaning generation and as liberatory in intent, which is their true nature. Fuchs contends that in the sociology of social movements there is a constant confusion of the political and the epistemological and of both with the ontological. The result is that a process of normalization is fundamental to the sociological project, and it is just this normalization that in Fuchs's view must be transcended. This view is supported by the work of Alain Touraine who suggests that "Social movements are not exceptional and dramatic events: they lie permanently at the heart of

social life … it is a fictitious belief that order comes first … what comes first is the work that society performs on itself" (Touraine 1981: 29).

For Touraine this leads to the contention that "Creation of a new order is the opposite of the conflict-loaded self-production of society" (Touraine 1985: 755), since social order in fact contains freedom and creativity and as such the possibility of self-transcendence. Whereas sociologists, sensing the limitations of their over-rationalist models, have turned in some numbers to the study of emotions, for the most part they have not yet turned to the study of the imagination, perhaps the most powerful human faculty. Yet as Fuchs argues, building on some arguments of Johann Arnason (1989), imaginaries represent the non-identity of society with itself without the risk of constructing yet further meta-actors or macro-subjects while restoring agency to the individual, requiring an interactive approach to the study of culture and avoiding the serious over-determination of so much social science thinking (Unger 2001).

This position has links to the work of the anthropologists Marilyn Strathern and Nick Thomas, which argues that "society" is a provisional accomplishment rather than functional reproduction, and that it is consequently necessary to move away from the older preoccupation with codes and systems to the study of practical enactments and improvisations. As Thomas suggests, what we have previously thought of as groups, cultures or collectivities are not in fact social aggregates, but "images of unity", likely to be imagined episodically even though their elements may exist implicitly as memories, potentialities or sources of tensions (Thomas 1997; Strathern 1988).

The issue of the true nature of sociology, a very significant one since sociology constructs and perpetuates images and models of society that are reproduced in policy, politics, personal self-images and consequently in individual and collective pathologies deriving from these images, is then at base essentially a philosophical one. An inadequate model of knowledge necessarily generates problems, not only for what it includes, but equally for what it excludes. As the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar attempts to demonstrate as an alternative to the rationalist aridity of much mainstream Anglo-Saxon philosophy, the roles of self-realization and spirituality in life are not marginal, but lie at the centre of people's existential engagement with the indeterminacies at the heart of life, the elusiveness of existence and the role of "chance" in shaping actual individual biographies and social change (Bhaskar 2002). Similarly the philosophy of Alain Badiou addresses directly the dual question of the nature of the "social" as

apparently structural (Durkheim's "social facts") and the experiential nature of human existence in which ultimately the singularity counts for more than the "general" (Badiou 2004). Anthropology and comparative sociology have for the most part not drawn the logical and theoretical conclusions of their own empirical investigations—that there can be other socialities and modes of conviviality quite other than our own (Overing and Passes 2000) and other ontologies that claim equal validity to the hegemonic Western versions (Clammer et al. 2004), and with their surprisingly short historical memory have forgotten or marginalized the work of pioneers such as Albion Small and many others who sketched the outlines of a holistic and open-ended sociology which has since sunk out of sight under the hegemony of certain forms of institutionalized social science (Becker 1971).

Denial and Hope

The ecological sociologist T. Athanasiou has argued that "We inhabit a paradox. Our age is tragic and catastrophe does threaten, but though the future is obscure, it does not come to us inexorable and inescapable. Our tragedy lies in the richness of the available alternatives, and the fact that so few of them are ever seriously explored" (Athanasiou 1996: 306–307). For this reason possible futures, whether posed in terms of civilizational dialogue, future studies, environmental sociology or development studies (which despite its many shortcomings does keep alive the major moral issues of the day and does place, even if unnamed as such, the problem of human suffering at its core), is as much the proper field of sociology as the analysis of the past or present. What is is not necessarily what has to be. The essential role of critical sociology—the exposure of our endless capacity for self-delusion and self-justification—needs at this juncture in time to be extended into the anticipation and management of the very future that those institutional forms and cultural patterns that constitute the subject matter of conventional and functionalist sociology have created and continue to create. As the American anthropologist Robert Murphy writes in his moving self-analysis of his own terminal illness, "The relationship between society and its symbolic standards for acting and evaluating, on the one hand, and the strivings and interests of ordinary people, on the other, are not neatly adjusted to each other and mutually supportive. Rather, the individual and culture are essentially in conflict, and history, instead of being the realization of human intentions and cultural values, is

commonly a contradiction of both" (Murphy 1987: 4). This strongly anti-Hegelian reading of history is indeed supported by many of the facts of our current situation. If modernity, as Zygmunt Bauman has argued (Bauman 1999), culminated in the Holocaust, so our current civilizational process, far from leading to the achievement of civility, has led to chaos, ecological meltdown, conflict, militarization, unbridled consumption and terminal resource depletion.

Sociology has in fact both underestimated the complexity of social processes and their rootedness in biology (the body, mortality, health and illness), ecology and elaborate but not fully articulated meaning and creativity systems (of which formal religions and formal art are simply institutionalized expressions), and has overestimated the ability of sociologists to formulate true and accurate models of those processes. R.G. Dunn suggests that "the current state of the world in which we live has created a particular problem for social theorists… The dominant modes of theorizing today are often unduly conditioned by the workings of contemporary culture itself, uncritically reproducing the basic structures, conditions and values of consumption society" (Dunn 1998: 221). Postmodernism is an expression of this for with its emphasis on radical subjectivity, constructivism and the short attention span of media driven societies, it not only reflects the essentially hedonistic culture of consumption, but effectively denies both the possibility of existential universals—love, death, memory, meaning and belonging—but also of the ecological context within which all human life occurs. The ecological crisis has effectively shown up the shallowness of social theories abstracted from the larger planetary framework: our theories have simply been too small, too simplistic and too anthropocentric to capture the reality that they purport to describe.

They have also been too Eurocentric. When Douglas Ezzy writes that, in contrast to the radical anthropocentrism of most sociological theory, "the ecocentrism of the deep ecologists has many similarities with the hermeneutical theory of Gadamer, Charles Taylor and to a lesser extent Bauman. In this communitarian tradition, the starting point is not individuals, but relationships" (Ezzy 2004: 10), he is right, and correct in pointing out that there is an alternative "communitarian" tradition in social thought. But nowhere does he (or any of the other major writers in environmental sociology that I am aware of) show any awareness of the existence of Asian, Native American, or African sociologies and cosmologies in which the, in my view correct, announcement by Deep Ecologists of the notion of the "ecological self"—a self formed and sustained not

only by the web of social relationships identified by social psychology and socialization theory, but equally of relationships, physical, cultural, economic, emotional and psychological, to nature (the foundational expression of this being Arne Naess 1988, but with many subsequent elaborations, for an anthology of which see Sessions 1995) was long anticipated and applied to a relational, ecological (often expressed in animistic terms) and emotions-based form of social thinking—in Japan for example in a very developed form (Clammer 1995).

We find here then a very interesting convergence between Asian sociologies and ideas emerging in particular out of Deep Ecology. These include an ecocentric rather than anthropomorphic concept of the self and its place in the universe, a relational rather than individualistic understanding of socialization and identity, a critique of industrial society's civilizational forms and culture and their destructive effects on resources and biodiversity, their spiritual aridity and their alienating effects on genuine human rootedness in the world. This is understood as being due to the suppression by industrial society of both people's intimate relationship to nature and the existential problems that confront all cultures—the existence of suffering, evil and death on the one hand, and love, the search for authenticity and the irrepressible thirst for meaning expressed in art and forms of spirituality on the other.

In Asian sociologies these elements can be found in differing ways in Buddhism, and especially in the forms of socially activist "Engaged Buddhism" that have emerged in Asia and the West in the last decade or so (Queen et al. 2003), inspired by the work of such figures as A.T. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka, Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam and the Dalai Lama. And likewise they can be found in yet different configurations in contemporary Gandhian social thought (Kappen 1990), the Confucian and Taoist traditions of China that have collectively been described as "Chinese Humanism", the rediscovery of Shinto as an ecological religion (International Shinto Foundation 1995), in attempts to define both Islamic economics and contemporary Islamic conceptions of social justice and human rights (Qutb 2000), and in Asian Christian theologies of liberation that have gone a long way towards both indigenizing Christianity in Asian contexts and drawing out of it profound liberatory principles (Pieris 1992; Wilfred 2003). In each of these cases the two central pillars of their social thought are religion and social justice. And while Islam and Christianity still lean towards an anthropocentric world view, the Buddhist, Shinto and Hindu traditions confirm the

ecocentric view of identity espoused by western Deep Ecology. I have argued elsewhere (Clammer 2000) that a fundamental shortcoming of cultural theory is its lack of universality signalled by its failure to take the religious dimension of culture seriously (or at all) and hence to restrict itself to an impoverished version of human identity. Cultural theory is largely trapped in its own constructed notion of culture, and this culturalism excludes any method for exploring the human relationship to both nature (one thinks of the radical opposition of nature/culture in major thinkers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss or Anthony Giddens), and to the transcendant, despite both being central to the ways in which actual human beings construct their maps of reality, their daily strategies and their emotional geographies.

For much conventional sociology, a preoccupation with methodology has driven out any concern with consciousness. As Alan Keightley puts it very aptly, "In what state of consciousness does the sociologist study other people's states of consciousness?" and he goes on: "D.Z. Phillips [in Phillips 1979] has argued forcefully to show how the sociologist offers us a persuasive, charming and dangerous story by impoverishing the mode of discourse it claims to analyze. He calls it the 'sociologizing of meaning' and claims that it 'blinds us to other possibilities of meaning, and is both the agent and the product of the very alienation from which it claims to offer liberation'. It has unspoken, subterranean assumptions about the world" (Keightley 1986: 152–153). The radical claim of Buddhism is of course on the one hand to relativize all such assumptions by showing them to be precisely that; if not strictly Maya—illusion—then certainly contestible and largely unexamined and themselves culturally received versions of the world, and on the other to provide not a set of fixed answers, but rather a methodology for cutting through such illusions and finding a bedrock from which the world can be concretely known and the role of the mind in creating that world more fully understood. This then is the true sociology, of which the models and data of academic sociology are the epiphenomena. The world is not in fact in any way a fully calculable object, and to mistake the map for the ground, the conceptual description of the world for the world itself (ibid.: 167), is the fundamental illusion of the social sciences.

In commenting on Marilyn Strathern's contention that, in arguing for the motion that the concept of society is theoretically obsolete, anthropological theories "have exhausted themselves" (Strathern 1990: 7). James F. Weiner suggests that "Once we have agreed that anthropology's starting

and ending points are the elucidation of social relationships, what then is our task? What kinds of problems are given us to solve against this grounding proposition? When I ask, in effect, 'What is left for us to say?' I am posing the following question: Against what epistemological limits will such a mode of questioning eventually run up? Such a question can only arise within the prior understanding that although such limits are part of the subject matter, they are not directly addressed through its explanatory apparatus alone. A theory—that is, a mode of explanation—is a world, and a world can not provide its own grounding… In other words, *we want to specify the conditions under which the world is perceived to be relationally based … prior to our analysis of it*" (Weiner 2001: 70). Sociology and anthropology are consequently subject to their own rules of social inquiry, but to solve this by positing a 'sociology of sociology' is inadequate as this internal investigation proceeds on the same grounds as that which it examines. The fundamental question is that of the grounds of sociology and hence of the questions that it can legitimately ask. An oversocialized and overculturalized notion of the self cannot provide the foundation for an adequate sociology of the real world, as the sociology of the body demonstrates. In recovering the body as a subject of sociological investigation, this seeming advance is nullified by the very sociologizing of the body that then occurs, and once again the discourse is trapped within itself. Without a larger reference point—nature—upon which the self and body are in fact (even if unwittingly) dependent, a circular discourse is entailed, and this is the fundamental problem of social/cultural theory: it has no reference point other than itself, and as such becomes not a system of explanation, but a self referential system. It is little wonder then that attempts at social engineering and "development" almost inevitably fail. As Roberto Calasso phrases it, "Around us there is an obstinate insistence on changing life, but without any specific notion of the facts of life" (Calasso 1995: 24).

Beyond Self-Referentiality

One of the ways out of this self-referentiality is as suggested to accept a notion of the ecological self, one which challenges social theory on the grounds of its paradoxically over-sociological view of human nature and of culture, and which dissolves the common distinctions between nature and society and the material and the symbolic (Lockie 2004). A second, and a significant one in the context of the mostly left-leaning and materialist character of critical theory, is as also suggested above: the reinsertion of

the recognition of the deeply significant role of the spiritual in cultural studies, or as Ihab Hassan phrases it in the context of a sympathetic but critical assessment of postcolonial studies, "Is it not short-sighted, then, for postcolonial studies to ignore the radical imperatives of the human spirit?" (Hassan 2002: 242), a possibility that allows him to explore both the role of Islam and of inter-civilizational dialogue: "Can divergent cultures also converge when their spiritual concerns meet … is it not likely that by understanding the spiritual dimensions in our own lives we can better understand, better translate, other lives" (ibid.: 242–243).

Several fresh or still unexplored directions then suggest themselves. These include a number of areas upon which sociology has indeed touched, but generally from a positivistic perspective. Such has been the case with both the sociology of the body and the emerging field of environmental sociology. The former, while liberating sociology from its over cognitive and anti-somatic biases, has largely failed to link the body to nature, or to the fundamental issue (central to any Buddhist approach to society) of suffering. In a way parallel to the literary critic Alvarez's insights into suicide, so the tragically autobiographical book by Robert F. Murphy (himself an anthropologist by profession) recording the progress of his own terminal illness and increasing disability, or that of the poet, critic and sometime professor of English, D.J. Enright (Enright 2003), describing his own relationship to his terminal cancer, go far deeper than anything produced within the sociology of the body literature. They not only provide, in Clifford Geertz's celebrated phrase, a "thick description" of illness and the bodily states associated with it, but they also expose the frailty of the body, the uncertainties and sense of tenuousness that the body's daily functionings and even minor malfunctionings introduce into daily life, its effects on moods, performance of even routine tasks, and above all its mortality. While sociology has attempted to create a sociology *of* the body, *of* literature, *of* art or *of* the environment, it has learnt very little from the actual content of these subjects and their own special ways of confronting the world: sociology itself in other words, has learnt little from its subject matter while busily attempting to impose its own categories and explanations on that subject matter.

Those dimensions of everyday life, vividly visible to those who actually live it, but apparently opaque to the sociologist, in fact provide the agenda of a true sociology that actually speaks of the fragility, mystery and temporality of life. In such a life the emotions, the body, nature, suffering, religion or some less codified form of spiritual expression, and as Overing and

Passes have shown, what might be legitimately called the aesthetics of everyday life, are the real core. One anthropologist who has taken this seriously is Paul Stoller, who writes that the social investigator has a responsibility: "This responsibility means that scholars seek ways of sensuously investigating, writing, and filming social life that enable the dead to live again and the living to recognize better ways of coping with the confusions of contemporary life. Is this not a burden worthy of future efforts to dwell in the embodied power of history?" (Stoller 1997: 43).

The founder of Deep Ecology, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, in an early essay (Naess 1973/1995) contrasted what he called the shallow approach of conventional, reformist environmentalism with all its compromises with the resource extraction industries and its wholly anthropocentric approach, which sees nature simply as a place for recreation for humans and as a source of medicines or other benefits equally for humans and with no intrinsic value in itself, and the approach of deep ecology which takes a biocentric approach, expands the concept of the self to include its deep dependence on and interconnectedness with nature and recognizes the rights of other living entities to be allowed to live and evolve in peace. In a similar way in this chapter, I am contrasting what I find to be the existential shallowness, culturalism and anthropocentrism of conventional sociology with the possibility of a rich and transforming engagement with the issues and approaches to life that artists, spiritual seekers, poets and deep ecologists have long pioneered, and the absence of which is both the source of so much of the aridity of sociology and the crises that global society and environment now confront. The materials for this reconstruction lie all around us—in those visions of the world just enumerated, in the works of those significant but marginalized thinkers mentioned early in this chapter and in the works of many others like them, and in the possibility that art and nature are not passive subjects of analysis but the carriers of valid knowledge, and as such, like the many forms of indigenous knowledge supposedly the subject matter of anthropology, ways of seeing and acting in and on the world. As the theologian and ecologist Thomas Berry puts it, in the context of our present crisis and the extraordinary denial that surrounds it, "We must recognize that the only effective program available as our primary guide toward a viable human mode of being is the program offered by the Earth itself" (Berry 1999: 71). The responsibility of sociology, as with the other social sciences, is to grasp that challenge.

References

Alvarez, A. (1974). *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide*. London and New York: Penguin Books.

Arnason, J. (1989). Culture and Imaginary Significations. *Thesis Eleven, 22*, 25–45.

Athanasiou, T. (1996). *Divided Planet: The Ecology of Rich and Poor*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.

Badiou, A. (2004). *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*. London and New York: Continuum.

Bauman, Z. (1999). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Becker, E. (1971). *The Lost Science of Man*. New York: George Braziller.

Berry, T. (1999). *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*. New York: Bell Tower.

Bhaskar, R. (2002). *Reflections on Meta-Reality: Transcendence, Emancipation and Everyday Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA and London: Sage.

Calasso, R. (1995). *The Ruin of Kasch*. London: Vintage.

Clammer, J. (1995). *Difference and Modernity: Social Theory and Contemporary Japanese Society*. London and New York: Kegan Paul International.

Clammer, J. (2000). Cultural Studies/Asian Studies: Alternatives, Intersections and Contradictions in Asian Social Science. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science, 21*(1), 47–65.

Clammer, J. (2005). Beyond Power: Alternative Conceptions of Being and the (Asian) Reconstruction of Social Theory. *Asian Journal of Social Science, 33*(1), 62–76.

Clammer, J., Poirier, S., & Schwimmer, E. (Eds.). (2004). *Figured Worlds: Ontological Obstacles in Intercultural Relations*. Toronto and London: Toronto University Press.

Dunn, R. G. (1998). *Identity Crises: A Social Critique of Post-Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Enright, D. J. (2003). *Injury Time*. London: Pimlico.

Ezzy, D. (2004). Old Traditions and New Ages: Religions and Environments. In R. White (Ed.), *Controversies in Environmental Sociology* (pp. 8–25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fuchs, M. (2004). Articulating the World: Social Movements, the Self-Transcendence of Society and the Question of Culture. In A. K. Giri (Ed.), *Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods* (pp. 37–56). Lanham, MD and Oxford: Lexington Books.

Hassan, I. (2002). Queries for Postcolonial Studies. In R. Araeen, S. Cubitt, & Z. Sardar (Eds.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory* (pp. 232–243). London and New York: Continuum.

Heilman, S. (1984). *The Gate Behind the Wall*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Heywood, I. (1997). *Social Theories of Art: A Critique*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

International Shinto Foundation. (1995). *Shinto to Nihon Bunka* [Shinto and Japanese Culture]. Tokyo: International Shinto Foundation.
Kappen, M. (Ed.). (1990). *Gandhi and Social Action Today*. New Delhi and Bangalore: Sterling Publishers.
Keightley, A. (1986). *Into Every Life a Little Zen Must Fall*. London: Wisdom Publications.
Lockie, S. (2004). Social Nature: The Environmental Challenge to Mainstream Social Theory. In R. White (Ed.), *Controversies in Environmental Sociology* (pp. 26–42). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Loy, D. R. (2003). *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
Murphy, R. F. (1987). *The Body Silent*. London: Phoenix House.
Myerson, G. (2001). *Ecology and the End of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Icon Books.
Naess, A. (1973/1995). The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements, *Inquiry* 16 (Oslo) reprinted in George Sessions, ed., *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*. Boston, MA and London: Shambhala, 151–155.
Naess, A. (1988/1995). Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World. In G. Sessions (Ed.), *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism* (pp. 225–239). Boston, MA and London: Shambhala.
Overing, J., & Passes, A. (Eds.). (2000). *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*. London and New York: Routledge.
Phillips, D. Z. (1979). Alienation and the Sociologizing of Meaning. *The Aristotelian Society Supplementary, LIII*, xxxx.
Pieris, A. (1992). *An Asian Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
Queen, C., Prebish, C., & Keown, D. (Eds.). (2003). *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
Qutb, S. (2000). *Social Justice in Islam*. Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International.
Sahlins, M. (1996). The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology. *Current Anthropology, 37*(5), 395–415.
Sessions, G. (Ed.). (1995). *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings in the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*. Boston and London: Shambhala.
Sri Aurobindo. (1962). *Human Cycles*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
Stoller, P. (1997). *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Strathern, M. (1988). *The Gender of the Gift: Problems About Society and Problems About Women in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Strathern, M. (1990). The Concept of Society Is Theoretically Obsolete: For the Motion (1). In T. Ingold (Ed.), *Group for Debate in Anthropological Theory* (p. 2). Manchester: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester.

Thich, N. H. (1998). *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Thomas, N. (1997). Collectivity and Nationality in the Anthropology of Art. In M. Banks & H. Morphy (Eds.), *Rethinking Visual Anthropology* (pp. 256–275). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Touraine, A. (1981). *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Touraine, A. (1985). An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements. *Social Research, 52*(4), 749–787.

Unger, R. M. (2001). *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*. London and New York: Verso.

Weiner, J. F. (2001). *Tree Leaf Talk: A Heideggerian Anthropology*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Wilfred, F. (2003). *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope*. Delhi: ISPCK.

CHAPTER 5

Inferential Dialectics: On Dialectical Reasoning in Critical Social Science and the Socio-Cultural World

Piet Strydom

Introduction

In his 'Dialectical Reasoning in Critical Social Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis' (2014), Norman Fairclough relates critical social analysis to dialectics, characterizing it as a form of 'dialectical reasoning'. What he has in mind is dialectics not merely as understood by argumentation analysts as a discipline associated with logic and rhetoric, but rather in the broader social scientific sense informed by Hegelian-Marxism which, in any case, does not necessarily rule out the classical conception. In its most general sense, therefore, he accepts with Roy Bhaskar (1993) that dialectics refers to any process of conceptual or social conflict, interconnection and change, in which the generation, interpenetration and clash of oppositions, leading to their transcendence in a fuller or more adequate mode of thought or form of life, play a key role.[1]

My intention here in reflecting on Fairclough's proposal is to develop an aspect of a novel cognitive sociological approach by pushing the boundaries of the understanding of dialectical reasoning through the

P. Strydom (✉)
School of Sociology and Philosophy, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_5

introduction of what may be called the inferential stance. It is inspired by Charles S Peirce (1992, 1998) who carefully analysed the logic of inference in the context of scientific practice as well as by Peirce's uptake in Critical Theory (e.g. Apel 1981; Habermas 1992).[2] But the contributions of two contemporary authors should also be mentioned since they helped sharpen the focus on this matter. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Robert Brandom (1994)—with no reference to the founder of pragmatism—enriched the understanding of inference by transposing it to the level of social practices in order to concentrate on the articulation of conceptual contents in communicative or discursive contexts.[3] In the early 1980s already, Alain Badiou (2013a [1982])—without mentioning inference at all—offered an analysis in the course of his attempt to revitalize Hegel's *Science of Logic* (2010), which can be taken to have rendered it in certain respects still more social-theoretically specific and relevant.

The reference point for the core of my argument is the fact that while Fairclough regards critical social analysis as based on epistemological dialectics which forms part of a larger set of dialectical relations, he passes over the explication of this 'epistemologically-based … constellation', particularly of the place and role of epistemological dialectics in that framework, in favour of focusing on its practical dialectical nature. The point, however, is that an adequate grasp of practical dialectics requires the simultaneous consideration of the operation of epistemological dialectics, both in the case of critical social analysis and of societal discourse and action. This can be done, in my view, by introducing the inferential stance in order to consider what I call the dialectics of inference or inferential dialectics.

Overview

As regards its essence, Fairclough sees dialectics encapsulated by the phrase 'absenting constraints on the absenting of absences', a phrase also drawn from Bhaskar which is intended to signal that it has an inherently emancipatory thrust. The fact that social reality at various levels includes absences of various kinds, both positive and negative ones, renders this idea comprehensible. Accordingly, dialectics concerns both the realization of unrealized potentialities and the elimination or overcoming of the lack of an adequate organization of social life. Still following Bhaskar, Fairclough not only understands classical dialectics in the sense

of 'epistemological dialectics', but also advocates that it is in need of being seen as relating to a variety of other forms, namely, 'ontological, practical and relational dialectics' (Fairclough 2014: 2). What should be stressed here, but is not, is the fact that epistemological dialectics runs its course on the level of both critical social analysis, on the one hand, and the object of study, namely, societal discourse and social action, on the other.

Considering that dialectics for Fairclough covers processes from conceptual thought via argumentation to social conflict, it is obvious that each of these different forms has its own unique centre of gravity and vanishing point. Epistemological dialectics, first, is concerned with the elimination of errors in thinking and thus the advancement of knowledge through argumentation—where argumentation is itself a matter of epistemological dialectics. The caveat here, in parenthesis, is: beware of too restricted a conception of epistemological dialectics. Ontological dialectics, second, applies to social states of affairs and is about changing existing ones into more appropriate and adequate arrangements. Practical dialectics, third, dovetails closely with the preceding form but has a much more specific focus in so far as it has the task of eliminating social pathologies and replacing them with phenomena worthy of legitimacy and justification. Relational dialectics, finally, is conceived as having to do with the elimination and replacement of the existing relations between societal discourse and the various dimensions of social reality with which it is dialectically interwoven. Critique, supported by explanation, plays a vital role in such elimination and replacement, the criteria of evaluation Fairclough favours being the Habermasian triad of 'truth, rightness and truthfulness' (Fairclough 2014: 4).[4]

The assumption from which Fairclough proceeds is that critical social analysis, including his forte critical discourse analysis (CDA), is a mode of argumentation which is based on epistemological dialectics but 'centrally' or 'primarily' (Fairclough 2014: 1, 4) takes the actual form of practical argumentation and, hence, of practical dialectics. Critical social analysis as a form of epistemologically based reasoning or argumentation is practical and dialectical by nature. On the one hand, it engages with an object, namely societal or 'political discourse', which is a form of practical argumentation; and, on the other, its method itself takes the form of practical argumentation which, in turn, counts as being dialectical in so far as it is oriented toward and seeks to stimulate transformation and change.

Evaluation

As suggested earlier, the central point to focus on is Fairclough's position on epistemological dialectics and the set of relations or 'constellation' to which it belongs. Three quotations offer useful indications:

> critical method as dialectical reasoning: an epistemologically based, which means argumentatively based, constellation of epistemological, ontological, practical and relational dialectics. (2014: 2)

> Dialectical reasoning is an epistemologically-based constellation of epistemological, ontological, practical and relational dialectics. It is epistemologically based because it *is* a form of (primarily practical) reasoning, realized in practical argumentation and deliberation. (2014: 9)

> deliberation can potentially take the form of dialectical reasoning, but it rarely does, the potential is only partly actualized. I suggest that an aim of critical social analysis, and of CDA in particular, is to realize, more fully actualize, this potential, both in its own method and in 'members' methods'—those of politicians, policy experts, citizens and so forth. For everyone with an interest in emancipatory change can gain by appreciating: how discourse (and ideas and beliefs), states of affairs, goods and ills are articulated together in existing reality; that emancipatory change requires "absenting", eliminating and replacing, all three, and the relations that hold them together; that emancipatory change can result from critique only via the mediation of explanation. Dialectical reasoning binds these together in an operational way. (2014: 9)

Critical social analysis, particularly its method, is identified with dialectical reasoning. In turn, dialectical reasoning is seen as a constellation of a number of different dialectical forms which are based on the epistemological dialectical form. What does this epistemological base entail? More specifically, what does it mean to say that the critical method is epistemologically based 'because it *is* a form of … reasoning'? Would it not be more precise rather to say that critical social analysis is epistemologically based because, as a form of practical reasoning, it pre-supposes and is steeped in cognitive processes—processes of inference involving cognitive properties of various kinds and levels?[5] Simultaneously, this brings into question also the actualizable and realizable 'potential' of dialectical reasoning. What is this potential, where is it located, what is the repository of such potentialities? It would be possible to answer this question only with reference to the implicated cognitive properties and the knowledge

they contain and organize.[6] While Fairclough equates epistemology and argumentation or reasoning in a manner that leaves matters somewhat in the dark, then, one could assume first that epistemology concerns a range of cognitive properties such as concepts, ideas and beliefs bearing different types of knowledge, and, second, that argumentation or reasoning is the medium in which these cognitive properties are articulated. In the case of such articulation, he speaks of 'discourse' and of 'deliberation'. It is in this flowing discursive or deliberative medium of articulation that the epistemologically significant concepts, ideas and beliefs get related to and connected with features of reality, such as 'states of affairs' and 'goods and ills'. The binding effect of which Fairclough speaks by means of which dialectical reasoning operationally brings together these various features of reality is intelligible only in terms of the operative relations of articulation. But these operative relations require the inferential perspective to be made visible.

On close inspection, Fairclough exhibits a tendency to relate epistemological dialectics to critical social analysis and its method, and—as suggested—doing so without offering sufficient indications of what exactly is entailed by such a relation. It is at this juncture that the introduction of the inferential stance deriving from Peirce could shed valuable light on the epistemological basis of the methodology of critical social analysis. Not only does it specify three interrelated modes of inference, namely 'abduction', 'induction' and 'deduction' (Peirce 1998: 287–288), but it also identifies the ontological basis or dimension of reality providing a foothold for each of these modes, namely 'firstness' or quality, 'secondness' or object and 'thirdness' or mediating or synthesizing idea (Peirce 1998: 233). It should prima facie be obvious that this proposal is particularly relevant to a clarification of the dialectical 'constellation' of relations Fairclough has in mind. At the very core of his constellation of epistemological, ontological, practical and relational dialectics, and therefore essential to its proper understanding, is located what may be called inferential dialectics. This proposal has the advantage of bringing one much closer to the Hegelian-Marxist understanding of dialectics which Fairclough favours, or should one rather say to the Left-Hegelian understanding which is basically shared by such members of that tradition as Marx and his younger contemporary Peirce.

The dialectics of inference which is addressed below has a most important implication. It concerns the fact that epistemological dialectics should not and cannot be restricted to the internal workings of critical social inquiry as a social scientific engagement alone, since it is operative

also in social life itself. Not only critical social analysts proceed by way of a number of different yet related modes of inference, but so do social actors too. Epistemological dialectics in the very first place plays off at the very heart of the orientations, ideas, beliefs, interpretations, relations to features of social reality and the actions engaged in by those involved in social life. In the third quotation above, Fairclough indeed makes reference not only to critical social analysis's own method, but also to what he calls 'members' methods', those of politicians, policy experts, citizens and so forth. What those methods are beyond mere practical discourse, however, is not explored. And later, when he does affirm that 'the object' of critical social analysis is 'practical, dialectical argumentation' which is 'epistemologically-based' (Fairclough 2014: 9), what precisely this latter qualification entails is left hanging in the air. The thrust of the observation made here, therefore, could thus be summarized by saying that an adequate grasp of practical dialectics—the goal of critical social analysis—requires the simultaneous consideration of the operative features of epistemological dialectics in critical social analysis, on the one hand, and especially in the case of social actors, societal discourse and action, on the other. This can be done, as suggested earlier, by introducing inferential dialectics which allows the analysis of the unfolding and interrelations of the distinct dialectical movements of the different modes of inference.

To make this proposal comprehensible, I undertake to stress two major points—the first being a brief clarification of inference in critical social analysis or critical theory, and the second the dialectics of inference in social life.

Systematics

Inference in Critical Social Analysis[7]

In order to clarify the role of inference in critical social analysis, one has to have recourse to a *medium quo* or semiotic epistemology,[8] in the sense of a sign-mediated theory of the production, dissemination and application of knowledge—a process that, in turn, is understood as ontologically underpinned and as forming part of a much more encompassing process which includes the constitution of society as well as natural evolution in which humans in the age of the Anthropocene have themselves become a decisive factor (Strydom 2016). This is a theory of three-place

sign mediation of a Peircean provenance rather that the French two-place semiological conception (Strydom 2011, 2015b).

The triadic sign-relation or function, itself a process of mediation, consists of a sign which refers to something for a sign-user.[9] First, the sign itself has a material aspect and as such it forms part of the world in which sign-users participate and, therefore, it cannot be regarded just as a part of the symbolic dimension or, even worse, as a figment of the imagination. Second, the object to which the sign refers is real, which means that it is not just sense data, as in empiricism, nor merely an intentional object or phenomenon, as in phenomenology and interpretativism, and even less is it simply a fiction or simulated virtual or hyper-reality, as in post-structuralism and postmodernism. Third, the sign-user is not just an individual, but a community, in fact a real community stretching well beyond the scientific community as well as a temporally infinite, unlimited or ideal communication community representing a regulative and hence also a potentially critical principle. The three moments of the semiotic process—the material sign, the object referred to and the sign-using community—are mutually interdependent and processually intertwined. Pre-supposing each other, the exclusion of any one would amount to a reductive or abstractive fallacy of some kind which would have as a consequence inadequate mediation, short-circuiting or reification of the process of cognition, knowledge production, communication, practical realization and participation in the evolution of society and nature.

The process through which a community-based sign-user comes to interpret and understand the object signified by a sign as something specific is made possible and mediated by a number of different closely interrelated types of signs—namely 'icons', 'indices' and 'symbols' (Peirce 1998: 4–10). Important to note is that each of these three classes of signs respectively brings a distinct ontological dimension into play in the process of mediation. The ontological aspects are represented by the three universal categories Peirce (1998: 233) called 'firstness', 'secondness' and 'thirdness'. Considered in relation to the three classes, these aspects shed light on the specificity of the different types of signs. Accordingly, icons capture the singular quality of reality intuitively felt, indices the dyadically confronted, experienced, identified and observed object, and symbols finally the triadic representational conception which mediates, interrelates and brings these various moments into a consistent unity.

In the course of the process through which an understanding of a signified reality is acquired, the community-based sign-user obtains a grasp of

reality and develops knowledge about it through distinct yet interrelated modes of inference—namely abduction, induction and deduction (Peirce 1998: 287–288.) Deduction is a logically correct or necessary inference, such as for instance an axiomatic theoretical statement, that represents a generality which could play a context-setting role in the development of knowledge, yet under particular conditions could turn out to be false. Induction, by contrast, has the role of making available particulars which, in turn, could assert their authority against a purported generality under specific spatial and temporal conditions, the end result being either the confirmation or falsification of such a deduction. For Critical Theory as a form of critical social analysis, however, abduction—the only source of new knowledge—is of vital importance (Strydom 2011).

Abduction is one of the aspects that distinguish Critical Theory from its competitor critical approaches as well as from other methodological directions already criticized by Horkheimer in the 1930s and again by Habermas in the 1960s. In particular, the place of the positivistically reductive mode of inference called 'hypothesis' in empiricism is taken by abduction in Critical Theory. Adorno, for instance, criticized hypotheses since they are designed to establish Humean regularities or what can be regularly expected, and: 'What can merely be expected is itself a piece of societal activity, and is incommensurable with the goal of critique' (Adorno 1976: 69). The characteristic abductive inferential mode has always been central to the epistemological and methodological understanding of the critical theorists, although they did not necessarily call it by its technical name. Its origin, in any case, lies in the Left-Hegelian tradition, Peirce having formalized a mode of thinking which had been suggested by Kant and Hegel and at the time was unmistakably exhibited also by Marx. It is what Horkheimer and Adorno had in mind when they criticized the scientistic conceptual pair of induction and deduction and insisted on 'a thought process' (Horkheimer 1972: 43) or a dialectical procedure or constellational mode of thinking (Adorno 1976: 76, 1970: 162),[10] which draws specific elements together and forges clarifying relations. It is what Marcuse (1972: 154) had in mind when he emphasized the importance of 'fantasy' or 'imagination' in Critical Theory, and it was the intent of C. Wright Mills, with a pragmatist-critical theoretical education in his wings, when he famously coined the phrase 'the sociological imagination'.

Mills (1970: 14, 46, 183) brilliantly gave substance to abduction that makes the role of this inferential mode in critical social analysis graphically

clear. In his phraseology, abduction amounts to making a creative, insightful, potentially fruitful and practically effective connection in a historically specific context among 'personal troubles of milieu' at the micro-level, 'public issues of social structure' at the macro-level and, crucially, 'master symbols of legitimation' such as for instance 'reason and freedom' at the normatively relevant conceptual level. These three moments obviously correspond to Peirce's categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness respectively, while the identification of socio-practical ideas such as reason and freedom is an indisputable invocation of the potential and real possibilities of transcending the given state of affairs.

As an epistemological core structure, the three inferential modes of abduction, induction and deduction do not remain confined to the social scientific context, however, but are equally operative in social life itself. It is in this broader context that the dialectics of inference is best presented. As indicated in the introduction, this shift from the scientific to the socio-cultural context pre-supposes a supplementation of Peirce's modes of inference by insights drawn from Brandom's (1994) inferential semantics and Badiou's (2013a [1982]) critical reflection on Hegelian dialectics. It is possible to argue, of course, that the very idea of inferential dialectics had been prepared for by Peirce himself, considering just how deeply he had been influenced by his study of Hegel. In any event, it is noteworthy that he regarded 'public discussion' as a matter of 'dialecticism' (Peirce 1998: 59).

Dialectics of Inference in Social Life

Before embarking on an explication of the dialectics of inference in the socio-cultural context to which social scientific and critical social analyses also contribute in their own ways, it is advisable first to offer concise circumscriptions of each of the three modes of inference. This is done both formally and with a view to developing a grasp of the dialectics of inference in the socio-cultural world.

Formally, abduction is typically interpreted in a narrow sense as a mode or logic of inference yielding an explanatory hypothesis, but more broadly in tune with Peirce it can be regarded as a more than logical yet a less than speculative way of rendering reflexive and controlling the act of cognition so that the resulting knowledge mediates between the starting position and the target position, thus making engagement and responsible world creation possible. To begin to bring out its dialectical sense relevant to the

socio-cultural context already hinted at here by the Peircean conception, one could say that it refers to the inferential activity of an actor, whether individual or collective, who on the basis of an intuitive feeling about a particular situation reaches from within that situation toward conceptual support in order to be able to return to the situation and him/her/itself with a better understanding of the situation as well as of him/her/itself as a participant who is subject to its conditions.

Deduction is formally a mode or logic of inference that starts from a general premise, postulate, axiom or law in order to clarify and make sense of a particular or a number of particulars falling under it. For the purpose of the dialectical account to be presented, one could elaborate by saying that deduction refers to the inferential activity of an individual or collective actor who draws or deduces parameters, guidelines and thus potential tools for the clarification of a situation from the relevant general concept or concepts with which he/she/it then returns to the situation and to him/her/itself as an actor embroiled in it.

From a formal perspective, induction is a mode or logic of inference that starts from a particular situation to relate and bring together single observations about the particulars of the situation in such a way that a generalization about that situation results. Moving towards a dialectically relevant understanding, one could add that it concerns the inferential activity of an individual or collective actor who, possessing a modicum of self- and situational understanding, ascertains for him/her/itself the particulars of the situation with a view to developing a general view of the situation that would allow engagement with it.

This set of inferential-dialectical relations is summarized in Fig. 5.1.

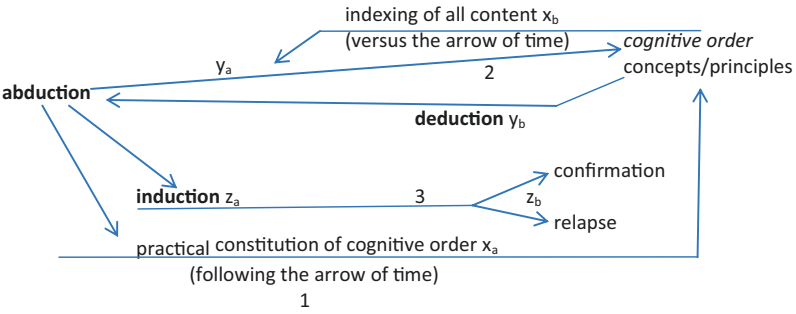

Fig. 5.1 The dialectics of inference

All in all, there are three distinct yet closely interrelated dialectical movements, each of which unfolds in two steps, sequences or moments. Taken together, these dialectical movements account first for the historical constitution and structuration of society, secondly for the articulation of social life by action and interaction that are culturally and socially regulated or amplified and moderated, and lastly for both successful attempts to transform the status quo and ones that fall back upon accommodating to it. In each case, a practical constructive sequence takes its course and produces a structural outcome that provides the conditions both for a theoretical assessment of what has been done thus far and for the subsequent sequence in which the carrying actor reflexively returns to him/her/itself in a reconstituted form. The task here, however, is to provide a description of each of these different dialectical movements and then to think them through in terms of the modes of inference corresponding to them.

An important feature of the three modes of inference qua dialectical processes should be noted that is not reflected in Fig. 5.1. With Bhaskar and Fairclough, one could accept that dialectics refers to any process of conceptual or social contestation or conflict, interrelation and change in which oppositions are generated, clash and interpenetrate, leading to their transcendence in a fuller or more comprehensive mode of thought or form of life. This means that each of the inferentially unfolding cognitive processes depicted in Fig. 5.1 should be understood as being driven by opposites engaged in some form of contestation or conflict and undergo intertwinement that lead to a structural outcome. The opposites could be different individual or collective actors, different orientations and ideas, different interpretations of the one and the same idea, different types of action and so forth. The conclusion is thus that dialectical-inferential processes should be regarded from a sociological or social scientific point of view. Besides observing inferential dialectics, a cognitively enriched version of such a viewpoint would of course also be acutely sensitive to the cognitive features of the listed social phenomena.

1. The movement at the most encompassing level—dialectical movement $x_a x_b$ in Fig. 5.1—captures the historical construction or practical constitution of society which follows the arrow of time as well as the emergent structural indexing and placement of everything belonging to society, humans as well as material and cultural objects, which goes against the grain of time's arrow. The opening constructive sequence—dialectical

sequence or moment x_a—is practice-based in the sense of being carried by action and communication, including contestation, conflict and learning. It comes to a close when it has given rise to a structural outcome that effectively represents its theory and thus allows its assessment and the attainment of clarity on the part of those involved through reflexivity. In this case, it is typically collective actors and more generally society that acquire self-clarification and self-understanding.

This structural outcome provides the necessary basis for the second sequence or moment—dialectical sequence x_b. In its most obvious appearance, this structural outcome is of a conceptual nature, representing the 'conceptual foundations of social organization' (Jackendoff 2007: 354),[11] or what I call the cognitive order of society, which represents the design principles or blueprint of the possible form that society could take. It is the cognitive order that through principles, for example such concepts as freedom, justice, solidarity, equality, truthfulness, authenticity, love, mastery, control, efficiency, instrumentality, truth and so forth,[12] lends structure to society by conceptually indexing or classifying every item belonging to it and placing everyone and everything in a particular location within a system of hierarchically ordered levels. The level of clarity and self-understanding that modern society and its members have attained is encapsulated by this structurally vital dimension. Together, the cognitive order and the self-understanding it underpins open opportunities not only for the articulation of the texture or woof and warp of society, but significantly also for attempts to deepen and broaden this meta-cultural structure and its ramifications at lower levels, including approaches seeking to go beyond it by means of transformative action. Room is thus made for two further dialectical movements to be addressed in paragraphs 2 and 3 below, each of which, like the first, are at their cores internally driven by inferential activities and achievements.

In inferential terms, the first sequence of dialectical movement $x_a x_b$ is an abductively driven, constructive process that depends on practices of various kinds such as problem-solving, social relationship building and world-creation. It is driven by the abductive inferential mode in so far as such practices require variable degrees of intuitive feeling about a situation, envisaging what could be done and a corresponding motivation to engage and take action aimed at realizing it. In its original manifestation over many thousands of years of human evolution, this constructive process gave rise to the various cognitive order principles

and thus allowed the constitution of society, and since the latter achievement it has continued to play a role in the reproduction and modification of society and its design principles. The second sequence of dialectical movement $x_a x_b$, which pre-supposes the availability of the cognitive order, exerts its global structuring or incursive effect on the socio-cultural world in the form of indexing all its contents by virtue of the fact that it is deductively being drawn upon. This is accounted for by the fact that for us humans anything is something at all only in so far as it is conceptualized, in so far as it has a unique semantically rich cognitive schema that distinguishes it from everything else and thus also assigns it a place within the whole.[13] This global constitution and structuring of the socio-cultural world is articulated and fleshed out by the second dialectical movement, which occupies a lower level where it implicates the contents rather than the form of that world.

2. The dialectical movement by means of which the actual articulation of the texture or woof and warp of social life proceeds—dialectical movement $y_a y_b$ in Fig. 5.1—embraces, like any form of dialectics, two distinct yet closely related sequences or moments. The first sequence y_a is borne by the orientations of the involved social actors on the basis of their cognitive endowments, the development of their capacities into competences, expectations and interests, and their cultural and institutional positioning as determined by their respective conceptual and placement indexing. It takes the form of an actor seeking to attain situational and self-understanding by reaching toward the cognitive order of society for conceptual support and clarification. Once an actor reaches this structural dimension, the conditions are available for the second sequence y_b to take off. It consists of the actor scanning the cognitive order for the relevant concept or principle, whether in the singular or the plural, and making a selection or selective combination that would enable the actor to attain, if not relatively full, then at least a helpful degree of situational and self-understanding. After this detour through the common stock of conceptual pre-suppositions of society, the actor is able to return to him/her/itself in the given situation, albeit as a changed or enriched actor different from the one who had originally set out on the abductive quest.

   From the inferential perspective, the first sequence or moment of dialectical movement $y_a y_b$ is driven by an orientation that is abductively based. As an abductive search for conceptually supported and clarified self- and situational understanding, sequence y_a is directed toward the

conceptual foundations of society with the aim of deducing the necessary cognitively structured semantic content, whether insight, knowledge or wisdom, from the cognitive order. The primary question here for the actor involved is how to approach the situation in which he/she/it finds him/her/itself and how to render both the relevant features of the situation and the actor in it sufficiently intelligible to be able to continue participating in social life. The second sequence y_b is a classic case of the inferential mode of deduction. Here the problem facing the actor is to identify the relevant cognitive order concepts or principles and to make a fitting selection of one or, more typically, a selective combination of a number of them. Is it a social situation with political implications or one with moral-ethical implications, or is it a situation in which the implementation of new scientific-technological considerations give rise to important social, political and environmental implications? An inherent feature of each of the available concepts or principles which makes selection possible is that they represent binary codes in the sense of having a predominantly positive value but simultaneously also a negative value enabling discrimination and critical assessment.[14] While the actor has to choose between the presented values depending on the situation and the position occupied in it, this competence is exercised without necessarily permanently excluding the unselected side. In by far the greatest majority of cases of the kind of dialectical movement that is inferentially characterized by an abductive thrust and a deductive selection among binarily coded concepts or principles, the clarity and self-understanding gained translates into routine practices of action and communication which articulate the woof and warp of social life without pushing beyond its boundaries. The third dialectical movement differs sharply from the second precisely in this particular respect.

3. By comparison with the second one above, the third dialectical movement—$z_a z_b$ in Fig. 5.1—as a movement covering its full double-sequence trajectory is historically rare. Yet what lends it particular importance and interest is the fact that its first sequence or moment is virtually always ready in social life in some latent form, despite the fact that it may not be allowed any standing or simply goes noticed.[15] It arises under the conditions of the structuring of society which generate resistance and opposition to the constraints entailed by the impact of its conceptual and placement indexing. The resulting cultural and socio-political cleavages thus provide a foothold for the mobilization of

action aimed at the replacement of the associated classifying, placement and organizational effects. This sequence, namely z_a, is typically instigated and borne by a collective actor who, finding itself conditioned by a situation, sets out to gather what is considered to be the relevant particular features of that situation. This is done with a view to arriving at a general grasp and assessment of the situation that could—and under certain historical conditions in fact did—form the basis for radical action aimed at undermining, transforming or drastically changing the status quo. This first sequence comes to a close when such a structure-forming generality emerges, and it is from this platform that the second sequence or moment, namely z_b, takes off or, at least, could take off.

The latter sequence represents the embodiment of this general point of view and assessment in the form of some strategically organized collective action which is deemed to be appropriate to challenge certain aspects of the commonly accepted understanding of the concepts or principles of the cognitive order and their classifying, placement and organizational implications and impacts. The particular form of these concepts or principles, the fact that they function as binary codes, is of central importance here, seeing that it is the negative values—for example, lack of freedom, inequality, injustice, insincerity, debilitating control, domination and inefficiency—that serve as reference points for the questioning of the meaning and cogency of accepted pre-suppositions and for attempts to explore and excavate their semantic surplus, logical form and informational redundancy.[16] The fate of such action is of course rather varied. It could succeed to a significant degree, as in the case of the early modern constitutional revolutions, or it could be brutally suppressed, as was the Paris Commune of 1871, or finally it could degenerate into a relapse,[17] in which case its motivation and goal are emasculated by being quietistically realigned with the demands and requirements of the status quo.

Adopting the inferential stance and asking what mode of inference is operative in dialectical movement z_az_b, it becomes apparent that it is characterized by the primacy of induction. The movement represents an inductive engagement with a situation with a view to arriving at a general perspective on the situation that would allow the taking of what is deemed the appropriate action under the circumstances. Its first sequence or moment z_a unfolds inductively in search of the relevant particulars of the situation that need to be related to each other in order to build up a general understanding of the situation in terms of

both its negative and positive features. The trajectory from particulars to generality is a pre-condition of the second sequence or moment z_b that is characterized by the application to the situation of the general clarity and understanding gained in the course of the first sequence. Such an application is a practical one that is given the form of action aimed at improving the situation by eliminating or, at least, mitigating its negative features and by realizing the real possibilities identified against the inexhaustible penumbra of its potentialities. As suggested earlier, the action taken on the basis of the inductively generated general grasp of the situation, besides being brutally crushed, could go basically in any one of two different directions—either transforming the situation or relapsing in the sense of falling back into the comfort zone of the status quo. Perhaps, there is also the possibility of a muddy mixed outcome of muddling through.

Dialectical Loose Ends Tied Together

Having described the three basic dialectical movements depicted in Fig. 5.1 in terms of their double-sequence structure from the inferential point of view, it is necessary at this point to recall that inferential dialectics means that, far from being isolated occurrences, these different movements are dialectically interrelated. One way of grasping these dialectical interrelations is in terms of Peirce's categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness. Without exception, all of them are always implicated in the inescapably semiotic processes of human cognition, orientation, interpretation, action, interaction and so forth: a one-dimensional motivating even if vague intuitive feeling about being in a particular situation, a two-dimensional confrontation with and hence reference to an object, and a three-dimensional conceptual-logical synthesis of all the dimensions. In the concrete case, correspondingly, the dynamic interrelation of the three modes of inference—abduction, induction and deduction—that brings these three ontological aspects into play takes on an intricately interwoven dialectical pattern which is both flexible and complex.

An important implication of the dialectical relation among the three inferential modes becomes apparent from a comparison of it with such historically and currently influential directions as Parsonian cybernetics, French semiology, Giddens's structuration theory, American neo-institutionalism and Luhmannian systems theory. All of these theoretical approaches suffer

from some form of epistemological-ontological deficit that has the dire consequence of a circular mode of reasoning, not unlike the Achilles heel of Hegel's *Logic*, which is often cast in the mould of a process. Processual thinking is of course important, but not at the expense of action and historicity. The assumption of circularity in each case differs depending on the type of deficit. Cybernetics links energy and information while overlooking action; semiology stresses the signifier and the signified to the exclusion of the object referred to; structuration theory and neo-institutionalism celebrate routine to such an extent that action becomes marginalized; and systems theory focuses on the system/environment distinction while denying the relevance of action.

By contrast with such positions, it should be insisted that abduction, induction and deduction are all-pervasive and therefore always without exception implicated. Abduction as the placeholder of the motivation of action and the impetus toward historicity is always immanent, even if often in a latent form which remains largely invisible. It is not merely oriented toward deduction, but it also inspires induction. For its part, induction stands for our contact and confrontation with a reality that throws up problems for us and offers resistance to our efforts, whether in the form of limitations to overcome or disagreements and conflicting views to reconcile. No abductive intuition could be substantiated and realized without the inductive mode of inference enabling the construction of a general perspective appropriate to a particular situation by collecting and sorting all the relevant particulars. And, lastly, deduction confirms not only the cognitive fluidity of the members of *Homo sapiens sapiens* (Strydom 2015b) and hence our ability to see patterns and synthesize disparate particulars, but simultaneously also our dependence on the conceptual as well as the logical and mathematical foundations of the human social form of life. In science, we depend on theories of various kinds and, correspondingly, in the case of the social form of life or society more attention should be given to the cognitive order containing its design principles—that is, without blowing it up into a woolly metaphysics or a grandiose meta-theory which in a structuralist or systems-theoretical fashion effectively snuffs out abduction and induction, particularly action and historicity. In fact, the cognitive order of society is in dire need of being acknowledged and theoretically thematised for the purposes of understanding better the inferentially operating cognitive processes that serve as a pre-condition of society and are essential to both its normal reproduction and its transformation and change.

Conclusion

Fairclough's treatment of critical social analysis as a form of dialectical reasoning drew my attention because it resonates strongly with my own concerns as a social scientist who identifies with the perspective of Critical Theory which has always in principle been regarded in these very same terms. According to him, dialectical reasoning embraces a constellation of differently pitched types of dialectics, including practical, ontological and relational dialectics, all of which are based on epistemological dialectics. In explicating this constellation, he kept his focus firmly trained on practical dialectics which he takes to characterize critical social analysis qua a project of argumentation aimed at change and emancipation as well as the practical discursive argumentation of politicians, policy experts and citizens. This strategic decision of his has the tendency, however, of marginalizing the internal workings of dialectical reasoning, particularly the place and role of epistemological dialectics. By contrast, I am convinced that unless more detailed consideration is given to epistemological dialectics in the course of critically analysing relevant social phenomena, an adequate grasp of crucial aspects of practical dialectics would remain elusive. Epistemological dialectics is not simply a basic pre-supposition that one could assume without reflection; on the contrary, it should be part and parcel of the critical social analysis of relevant social phenomena.

Consequently, I saw it as my task to compensate for this gap by exploding Fairclough's account from the inside out, as it were, by highlighting the need to observe the principal operative features of epistemological dialectics and to elaborate on those features in a more systematic manner. My proposal was to introduce the inferential stance which allows the clarification of the operation of different yet closely related modes of inference in both social science and the socio-cultural world—the latter being particularly important since inference is usually associated with scientific practice rather than with social action, interaction, discourse and so forth. The elaboration from this perspective resulted in an integral account which I proposed to call the dialectics of inference or inferential dialectics. The exposition of inferential dialectics offered, I am convinced, confirms the point that an adequate grasp of practical dialectics requires the simultaneous consideration of the relevant features of epistemological dialectics. Finally, it should be pointed out that the inferential-dialectical perspective itself forms part of a broader approach—a cognitive sociological approach—that focuses on the cognitive processes on which the construction and structuring of society depend and which pervade its every fibre.

Acknowledgement I wish to thank Norman Fairclough for graciously having provided me with a copy of his 2014 ISSA paper as well as with relevant contextual information.

Notes

1. In 'Dialectics of Discourse', Fairclough (2012) considers dialectics from a historical point of view which leads him to consider social change with the focus on those processes—for example, 'enactment' and 'inculcation'—through which new discourses become embedded and operationalized in economies and societies.
2. It should be noted that while Habermas (1992: 109–111) criticizes Peirce for tending towards an overextension of his doctrine of synthetic inferences by basing it on natural evolution and concomitantly neglecting the objectivity of contradiction and difference in linguistic communication, it should be pointed out that the sign-mediation through which inference unfurls cannot be exclusively confined to the latter either. See also footnote 8 below.
3. More recently, Brandom (e.g. 1999) sought to read also Hegel as an inferentialist, but what he does not do is taking Hegelian dialectics seriously. A series of his lectures on Hegel is available on YouTube.
4. This represents a considerable improvement on Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer (2004: 5) who referred to Habermas' triad as 'truth, truthfulness and appropriateness', thereby exhibiting the symptomatic normative poverty threatening critical realism: Habermas' (1984: 39) normatively crucial 'rightness' is absent and the aesthetic or conative component is mistakenly duplicated.
5. Noteworthy is Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer's (2004: 4) encounter with the cognitive problematic: as fleetingly as they recognize the relevance of the cognitive dimension, as abruptly they turn their back on it.
6. In 'The Dialectics of Discourse', Fairclough (2012: 4) speaks of 'imaginaries … projections of possible states of affairs, "possible worlds"', but this still begs the question of the source on which such imaginaries feed, namely the cognitive order of society.
7. Here I draw on Strydom (2011: 143–151), in which a fairly detailed treatment of inference and its implications in Critical Theory is offered against the background of the Left-Hegelian tradition shared by Critical Theory and pragmatism since Marx and Peirce.
8. Fairclough regards semiosis as an important if subordinate part of his critical approach, but what is remarkable is that it is not treated at its proper level, as I am assuming here. Since semiosis is confined to the symbolic as distinct from the material dimension of social life, as in Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer (2004), the semiotic medium allowing mediation through three-dimensional signs which implicates the material dimension as well is lost

sight of. Ultimately, this occludes the possibility of appreciating the place and role of humans in both sociocultural and natural evolution, on which see, for example, Strydom (2015c, 2016).

9. Apel's (1981) seminal Peirce studies of the 1960s played a crucial role in bringing the neglected founder of pragmatism and his semiotic thought to attention in Europe and beyond.
10. Of the traditional emphasis on only two rather than three modes of inference, Adorno (1976: 76) has the following to say: 'The conceptual dichotomy of induction and deduction is the scientistic substitute for dialectics.'
11. In an earlier work, Jackendoff (1999: 74) proposes to conceive of these conceptual foundations as the universal skeleton of human culture. The linguistic or conceptual dimension is most obvious, but there are of course also other rule systems involved—for example, logic, mathematics and informational redundancy.
12. For a more comprehensive presentation of the cognitive order, see for example, Strydom (2015a), especially Table 1, p. 278.
13. Badiou (2013a [1982]: 6–9) stresses what may be called placement indexing, but analytically considered it pre-supposes what may be called conceptual indexing, which classifies places in the first instance.
14. Horkheimer (1972: 28) writes that 'the categories that govern social life simultaneously contain their own condemnation' (my translation). See also Luhmann (1995: 142–143, 444–445, 1998: 359–365) on binary coding.
15. Badiou (2013a [1982]: 18–21) is fascinated by this particular dimension of dialectics and takes pains in his critical treatment of Hegel's *Science of Logic* to extract and bring it to the fore. In his esoteric vocabulary, this latent phenomenon which is ontologically of the world yet according to the logic of appearance is not in the world is referred to as the 'inexistent' (2013b [2006]: 321–324). The sociological concept of 'latency' is relevant here, on which see for example Luhmann (1995: 294, 334–340). In Critical Theory, Honneth (2003: 238–245) stresses the importance of a latent surplus or potential in society that re-emerges time and again to press towards its realization, which is captured by the Left-Hegelian concept of 'inner-social transcendence'.
16. Besides a transcendental argument drawing on Kant and Hegel and such followers of theirs as Peirce, Apel and Habermas, the idea of the cognitive order and its principles could be justified in an number of different modes, including: linguistic drawing on, for example, Jackendoff (1999, 2007); formal logico-mathematical drawing on, for example, Peirce (1992, 1998) and Piaget (1983); and information-theoretical focusing on redundancy drawing on, for example, Van Peursen, Bertels and Nauta (1968) and Luhmann (1998).
17. Badiou (2013a [1982]: 9–11), once again, elaborates on this, the Hegelian concept of *Rückfälle*.

References

Adorno, T. (1970). *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, T. (1976). Sociology and Empirical Research. In T. Adorno et al. (Eds.), *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (pp. 68–86). London: Heinemann.

Apel, K-O. (1981 [1967, 1970]). *Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Badiou, A. (2013a [1982]). *Theory of the Subject*. London: Bloomsbury.

Badiou, A. (2013b [2006]). *Logics of Worlds*. London: Bloomsbury.

Bhaskar, R. (1993). *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*. London: Verso.

Brandom, R. (1994). *Making it Explicit*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Brandom, R. (1999). Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms. *European Journal of Philosophy, 7*(2), 164–189.

Fairclough, N. (2012). *The Dialectics of Discourse*. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from https://www.sfu.ca/cmns/courses/2012/801/1-Readings/Fairclough%20Dialectics%20of% 20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf

Fairclough, N. (2014). Dialectical Reasoning in Critical Social Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, ISSA (International Society for the Study of Argumentation) Proceedings. Retrieved February 2, 2015, from https://lancaster-uk.academia.edu/NFairclough

Fairclough, N., Jessop, B., & Sayer, A. (2004). Critical Realism and Semologic. In J. M. Roberts & J. Joseph (Eds.), *Realism, Discourse and Deconstruction* (pp. 23–42). London: Routledge.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Vol. 1). London: Heinemann.

Habermas, J. (1992). Peirce and Communication. In J. Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (pp. 88–112). Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2010 [1812]). *Science of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Honneth, A. (2003). The Point of Recognition. In N. Fraser & A. Honneth (Eds.), *Redistribution or Recognition* (pp. 237–267). London: Verso.

Horkheimer, M. (1972). *Traditionelle und kritische Theorie*. Frankfurt: Fischer.

Jackendoff, R. (1999). *Languages of the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jackendoff, R. (2007). *Language, Consciousness, Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social Systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Luhmann, N. (1998). *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (Vol. 1). Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Marcuse, H. (1972 [1937]). *Negations*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Mills, C. W. (1970 [1959]). *The Sociological Imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Peirce, C. S. (1992 [1867–1893]). *The Essential Peirce* (Vol. 1), edited by N. Houser and C. Kloesel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Peirce, C. S. (1998 [1893–1913]). *The Essential Peirce* (Vol. 2), edited by Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Piaget, J. (1983). *Meine Theorie der geistigen Entwicklung*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
Strydom, P. (2011). *Contemporary Critical Theory and Methodology*. London: Routledge.
Strydom, P. (2015a). The Latent Cognitive Sociology in Habermas: Extrapolated from "Between Facts and Norms". *Philosophy and Social Criticism, 41*(3), 273–291. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453714563877.
Strydom, P. (2015b). *Ecocriticism Beyond Constructivism and Realism: From Abstractive Fallacies to Full Sign-Mediation*. Paper Presented at the International Conference 'Sign and World: Implications for Ecocriticism', Central University of Tamil Nadu, Kangalanchery, India, 1–2 September.
Strydom, P. (2015b). Cognitive Fluidity and Climate Change: A Critical Social-theoretical Approach to the Current Challenge. *Special Issue on Climate Change, European Journal of Social Theory, 18*(3), 236–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/13648431015579961.
Strydom, P. (2016). The Sociocultural Self-creation of a Natural Category: Social-theoretical Reflections on Human Agency under the Temporal Conditions of the Anthropocene. *European Journal of Social Theory*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431016643330.
Van Peursen, C. A., Bertels, C. P., & Nauta, D. (1968). *Informatie*. Utrecht and Antwerp: Aula.

CHAPTER 6

Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action: From Discourse Ethics to Spiritual Transformations

Ananta Kumar Giri

In his stress on performative competence Habermas consistently privileges speaking over hearing or listening […] In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, a categorical distinction is drawn between "cognitive-instrumental" and "communicative rationality" but the distinction is dubious given that both are modes of formal reasoning.

—Fred Dallmayr (1991) *Life-World, Modernity and Critique: Paths Between Heidegger and Frankfurt School*, p. 24, p. 11

The speculative employment of reason with respect to nature leads to the absolute necessity of some supreme cause of the world: the practical employment of reason with a view to freedom leads also to absolute necessity, but only of the laws of the actions of a rational being as such. Now it is an essential principle of reason, however employed, to push its knowledge to a consciousness of its necessity. It is however an equally essentially restriction of the same reason that it can neither discern the necessity of what is or what happens. [Reason] cannot enable us to conceive the absolute necessity of our unconditional practical law.

—Immanuel Kant (1981) *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics*, p. 101

A.K. Giri (✉)
Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_6

> In the wake of metaphysics, philosophy surrenders its extraordinary status. Explosive experiences of the extraordinary have migrated into an art that has become autonomous. Of course, even after this deflation, ordinary life, now fully profane, by no means becomes immune to the shattering and subversive intrusion of extraordinary events. Viewed from without, religion, which has largely been deprived of its worldview functions, is still indispensable in ordinary life for normalizing intercourse with the extraordinary. For this reason, even postmetaphysical thinking continues to coexist with religious practice—and not merely in the sense of the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous. This ongoing coexistence even throws light on a curious dependence of a philosophy that has forfeited its contact with the extraordinary. Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of a semantic content that is inspiring and even indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses.
>
> —Jürgen Habermas (1992), *Postmetaphysical Thinking,* p. 51

Introduction and Invitation

The contemporary moment is characterized by unmet challenges both in theory and practice. Processes of change at work in individual social systems as well as interaction among different societies in the global ecumene bring to the fore the unfinished task lying before us with regard to moral consciousness and communicative action. Now because of globalization, as "moral issues stemming from cultural diversity … that used to arise mainly between societies now increasingly arise within them" (Geertz 1986: 115), the nature of interaction between different cultures with widely variant moral standards and the development of a critical reflective consciousness on the part of the actors where moral issues are not easily disposed of either through a convenient relativism or universalism is an epochal challenge before us. Similar is the task when we come to individual social systems as they are characterized by pervasive structural differentiations, and as in these societies "morality gets no clear status in the construction of a structurally differentiated life world" (Habermas 1987a: 92). A related issue here is the unprecedented crisis of institutions that characterizes individual social systems to cope with the contemporary dynamics of change in self, society and culture. For many insightful critics, our contemporary dilemmas are also significantly institutional, in as much as they spring from the irrelevance of existing institutions and lack of

availability of new institutions to guide our private lives and the public sphere. These institutional dilemmas are primarily "moral dilemmas" (Bellah et al. 1991: 38) which call for a new moral language to think about our institutions as they are now ridden with "unprecedented problems" (Bellah et al. 1991: 42). For instance, reflecting on contemporary American society, Robert Bellah and his colleagues argue that in the face of the challenge of the present and the dislocations of the post-industrial transition there is an urgency to think of "democracy as an ongoing moral quest," not simply as a political process—"as an end state" (Bellah et al. 1991: 20). They are emphatic in their proposition that we currently need a new "moral ecology" to think creatively about institutions—their predicament and possibility, since "the decisions that are made about our economy, our schools, our government, of our national position in the world cannot be separated from the way we live in practical terms, *the moral life we lead as a people*" (Bellah et al. 1991: 42; emphasis added).

The imperative for a moral grounding of institutions in contemporary practice is paralleled by reflective developments in theory as well. This is most evident in the restructuring of theory from structure to reflective self in thinking through moral consciousness and communicative action. The most important sign of this restructuring is the theory of "post-conventional" morality developed by psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. In his theory of moral development one's moral consciousness is not a mere appendix to social conventions, and one is able to differentiate oneself "from the rule and expectation of others" and one's "values in terms of self-chosen ethical principles" (Cortese 1990: 20). The idea of post-conventional morality rescues moral consciousness from unreflective sociologism, where morality is looked upon as an extension of social norms and cultural expectations and brings critical reflection to its very core. In this move from unreflective sociologism to critical reflection, the self-justificatory systems of society and culture are critically lived, analyzed and transcended by seeking actors in quest of justice, well-being and freedom.

The current idea of post-conventional morality has a long pedigree in critical and transformation-seeking social theory, which can be drawn at least back to John Dewey's insightful distinction between customary and reflective morality at the turn of the century. For Dewey (1960: 29), "the question of what ends a man should live for does not arise as a general problem in customary morality. It is forestalled by the habits and institutions which a person finds existing all around him." "There can, however,

be no such thing as reflective morality except where men seriously ask by what purposes they should direct their conduct and why they should do so; what is which make their purposes good" (Dewey 1960: 30). The fact that reflective morality is accompanied by a scheme of critical evaluation is clearly stated by Dewey: "Reflection has its normal function in placing the objects of desire in a perspective of relative values so that when we give up one good we do it because we see another which is of greater worth and which evokes a more inclusive and more enduring desire" (Dewey 1960: 35). The work of Jürgen Habermas, an important interlocutor of our time who has engaged seeking souls in reflection on the present challenges of human emancipation, is a significant contribution to both the idea of post-conventional morality and the contemporary discourse of moral transformation of institutions. Habermas's work reflects the challenge of theory and practice outlined above. His *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* is an important contribution to the idea of post-conventional morality, with his distinction between critical moral reflection and ethical substantialism. He is also a systematic and transformation-seeking critic of institutional life under late capitalism, where his political criticism employs not only the familiar variables of class and power but also the less familiar ones of moral consciousness and communicative action. Habermas has written extensively on specific issues in the history and development of Germany, as well as on the wider questions of the history and discourse of modernity. Though Habermas is too easily categorized as the most prominent member of the contemporary European Left, his agenda has always involved a wider critical engagement, critiquing the conventional theories and methods of Marxism as well. In that sense, he has always pursued his task as a critic of the existing methods and systems. In his recent work, Habermas has championed the cause of radical democracy, one important aspect of which is the moral renewal of individuals and the public sphere (Habermas 1990b, 1994). Habermas argues that the task of human emancipation today requires a moral approach along with the familiar models of political action. Consider, for instance, the persistent question of poverty and disadvantage in advanced industrial societies. For Habermas, while in the classical phase of capitalism capital and labor could threaten each other for pursuing their interests, today "this is no longer the case" (Habermas 1990b: 19). Now the underprivileged can make their predicament known only through a "protest vote," but "without the electoral support of a majority of citizens … problems of this nature do not even have enough driving force to be adopted as a topic of broad and effective public debate"

(Habermas 1990b: 20). In this situation, for Habermas, a moral consciousness diffusing the entire public sphere is crucial for tackling the problem of poverty and disadvantage. As he argues: "a dynamic self-correction cannot be set in motion without introducing morals into the debate, without universalizing interests from a normative point of view" (ibid.). The same imperative also confronts us in addressing contemporary global problems such as environmental disaster, world poverty and the North–South divide.[1] For Habermas, in addressing these problems we also need a moral perspective, as he (1990b: 20) writes:

> these problems can only be brought to a head by rethinking topics morally, by universalizing interests in a more or less discursive form. The moral or ethical point of view makes us quicker to perceive the more far-reaching, and simultaneously less insistent and more fragile, ties that bind the fate of an individual to that of every other, making even the most alien person a member of one's community.

In this chapter, I strive to make a critical assessment of the work of Habermas with regard to his own stated goal of transformation. I begin with Habermas's own assumptions such as "linguistification of sacred" in the field of moral consciousness, and strive to look into incoherences in his project considered in accordance with its own norms. In other words, what I am interested in, to begin with, is an internal critique of the Habermasian agenda of transformation. In this way, I share a similar goal with the noted Habermas scholar Thomas McCarthy who sums up the objective of his critical engagement: "Rather than confronting Habermas's ideas with objections from competing theoretical traditions, I hope to bring out tensions in those ideas themselves" (McCarthy 1992: 52). But while I am interested in bringing out tensions in Habermas's ideas I am also engaged in interrogating Habermas's agenda from outside its own frame of reference precisely because the issues that these tensions raise cannot be resolved within its own frame. Thus, the tradition where I move towards from Habermas's own frame of reference is the tradition of spiritual criticism and spiritual transformation. While Habermas scholar Robert J. Antonio argues that the "secular and intersubjective turn in critical theory begun by Habermas can be completed by encouraging a broader dialogue with pragmatism" (Antonio 1989: 74), I submit that it is the question pertaining to intersubjectivity that requires an opening towards processes of spiritual transformation and

criticism. What I argue is that critical theory now must make a dialogue with critical and practical spirituality in order to achieve its own stated objective of transformation.

Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action: Habermas's Agenda

Habermas argues that at the contemporary juncture where the sacred no longer has the unquestioned authority that it once had, morality can no longer be grounded in religion. Rather it has to emerge out of and be anchored in a process of rational argumentation where the actors participate in undistorted communication as members of a community of discourse. For Habermas, the rise of the public sphere of rational argumentation and rationally motivated communicative action goes hand in hand with the relocation of the sacred from the domain of the "Unspeakable" to our everyday world of language, making it both an object and medium of our ordinary conversation. Habermas's moral theory has to be understood in his evolutionary framework of the "linguistification of the sacred" (Habermas 1987a) and the "structural transformation of the public sphere" (Habermas 1989).[2] He believes that morality, anchored in and emerging out of the rational arguments of participants in discourse, can fill the void created by the demise of the sacred order.

The idea of a rational society and an "ideal communication community" is central to Habermas's agenda of morality. In his emphasis on rationality, Habermas is "closest to the Kantian tradition" (McCarthy in Habermas 1987a: vii).[3] Both for Kant and Habermas, "calculations of rational choice generate recommendations relevant to the pursuit of contingent purposes in the light of given preferences," and "when serious questions of value arise deliberation on who one is, and who one wants to be, yields ethical advice concerning the good life" (ibid.). Like Kant, Habermas understands "practical reason as universal in import: it is geared to what everyone could rationally will to be a norm binding on everyone else" (ibid.). Habermas's discourse ethics, however, "replaces Kant's categorical imperative with a procedure of moral argumentation," shifting "the frame of reference from Kant's solitary, reflecting moral consciousness to the community of moral subjects in dialogue" (McCarthy in Habermas 1990a: vii).

For Habermas, "the projection of an ideal communication community serves as a guiding thread for setting up discourses" (Habermas 1990a).

Those who participate in this communication community have an urge to participate in not only communication but also in a discursive transformation, where "in the relationship between the Self and the Other there is a basic moment of insight" (ibid.). Habermas quotes George Herbert Mead, whose work he values a lot and whom he considers as one of the main inspirations behind his theory of communicative action, programmatically: "What is essential to communication is that the symbol should arouse in oneself what it arouses in the other individual" (Habermas 1987a: 15). Habermas tells us: "I think all of us feel that one must be ready to recognize the interests of others even when they run counter to our own, but the person who does that *does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self*" (Habermas 1987a: 94; emphasis added).

For Habermas, an urge for justification of norms that guide individual action is very much part of being human. Though Habermas is dismissive of questions of ontology, he proceeds with two basic assumptions about man: that he has a need for communication and an urge for justification.[4] He argues: "From the perspective of first persons, what we consider justified is not a function of custom but a question of justification or grounding" (Habermas 1990a: 20). This universal need for justification has a special manifestation in modern societies, where all norms have now "at least in principle lost their customary validity" (Habermas 1988: 227). In this context, the procedure of rational argumentation, which is the other name of "discourse ethics," fulfills this need for justification and provides the "discursive redemption of normative claims of validity" (Habermas 1990a: 103).

Habermas argues that the realization of moral consciousness is based upon our ability to take a hypothetical attitude to the "form of life and personal life history" that has shaped our identities (Habermas 1990a: 104). But those who are uncritical about their socialization by and immersion in the society and culture to which they belong are incapable of taking a hypothetical attitude towards these, since they fail to realize that though every form of life presents itself as the best possible form of "good life," it is the task of moral consciousness to go beneath such taken-for granted assumptions and self-proclaimed truths.[5] It is here that participation in the procedure of practical discourse functions as a redeeming process. First of all, it breaks the illusion of the "good life" that has been associated with a particular form of life by the force of custom and habit. While the "formal" ethics of a society binds us to its order and scheme of evaluation, discourse ethics breaks this bondage and enables us to

understand our own self as well as the validity of our culture from the point of view of justice. Habermas tells us that "the universalization principle of practical discourse acts like a knife that makes razor-sharp cuts between evaluative statements, and strictly normative ones, between the good and the just" (ibid.).

It is this concern for justice that creates an incessant thrust towards problematization,[6] laying bare the moral problems within our taken-for-granted cultures. For Habermas, a "thrust towards problematization" is essential for moral consciousness to emerge and to be at work in the context of the life world (Habermas 1990a: 107). He tells us how in the normal circumstances of what he calls "ethical formalism" this problematization is not possible.[7] But participation in discourse ethics enables the participants to look at their own culture critically, where criticism means discovering whether the "suggested modes of togetherness genuinely hang together" or not (see Neville 1974: 189). Habermas argues that "for the hypotheses-testing participant in a discourse, the relevance of the experiential context of his life world tends to pale" (Habermas 1990a: 107). He believes that "under the unrelenting moralizing gaze of the participants in discourse … familiar institutions can be transformed into so many instances of problematic justice" (1990a: 108).

Critical Discussion of the Idea of Discourse Ethics: Habermas's Self-Criticism

Habermas argues that the abstractive requirements in discourse ethics provide actors a cognitive advantage, a capacity for distantiation. But this cognitive distantiation is not enough either for the practice of discourse ethics or for the realization of moral consciousness. It calls for parallel emotional maturity, adequate motivational anchoring and growth. He argues that "cognition, empathy, and agape" must be integrated in our moral consciousness especially when we are engaged in the "hermeneutic activity of applying universal norms in a context-sensitive manner" (Habermas 1990a: 182). Thus he argues, reminding us of Christian imperatives for love and care, that "concern for the fate of one's neighbour is a necessary emotional prerequisite for the cognitive operations expected of participants in discourse" (ibid.). This integration of cognitive distantiation and emotional care is particularly required when the initial separation between morality and ethical life is to be overcome. He is aware

of the difficulties that this separation poses for the practice of morality. Thus he is not content to leave his agenda only at the "deontological level" like Kant. He is interested to bring back morality as a guide for action and reflection into practice. Habermas himself writes: "Moral issues are never raised for their own sake; people raise them by seeking a guide for action. For this reason the demotivated solutions that post-conventional morality finds for decontextualized issues must be reinserted into practical life. If it is to become effective in practice, morality has to make up for the loss of concrete ethical life that it incurred when it pursued a cognitive advantage" (Habermas 1990a: 179). This opening has to be achieved through "an integration of cognitive operations and emotional dispositions and attitude" that characterizes "the mature capacity for moral judgement" (Habermas 1990a: 182).

Though a notion of universal human justice is central to Habermas's perspective on moral consciousness, Habermas himself takes great care to emphasize that morality must obey both the principles of justice and solidarity; it must achieve an integration of "the ethics of love and ethics of justice." While the first "postulates equal respect and equal rights for the individual," the second "postulates empathy and concern for the well-being of one's neighbour" (Habermas 1990a: 200). For him "morality cannot protect the rights of the individual without also protecting the well-being of the community to which he belongs" (ibid.). Thus criticism of the taken-for-granted ways of life must be accompanied by a concern for the community. What is important to note is that both these concerns, for him, "should flow from an adequate description of the highest stage of morality itself" (Habermas 1990a: 182).

Discourse Ethics and Moral Consciousness: The Limits of the Habermasian Approach

But although Habermas speaks of the need for "adequate description of the highest stage of morality itself," he himself does not inquire into the nature and height of this stage. For him, it is the public sphere which constitutes this highest stage. Habermas speaks of appropriate emotional development and reflective engagement for the project of critical moral reflection to have its desired effect on individuals in society. But he does not look into the issue of how far his own rational approach can facilitate this. Participation in mutually transforming dialogue, which is the key

feature of Habermas's discourse ethics, raises the question of intersubjectivity—the mode of relationship between the self and the other. But the whole question of intersubjectivity—its realization and its needed rich description—for a project of morality to succeed is missing from Habermas.[8]

The question for us here is what kind of relationship between the self and the other is envisaged in discourse ethics—whether the self or the other are just talking to each other in discourse ethics or the non-self is also part of the self. In this context, McCarthy argues that Habermas's agenda only refers to ethical self-clarification, and "ethical self-clarification itself cannot get us beyond the value differences that may result from it" (McCarthy 1992: 62). It is perhaps for this reason that Zygmunt Bauman (1993: 84) writes: "a post-modern ethics would be one that readmits the other as a neighbour into the hard core of the moral self … an ethics that recasts the other as the crucial character in the process through which the moral self comes into its own." But the process of this dialectic between self and other is not only rational but also spiritual. As Robert Bellah et al. argue, paying attention to the needs of the other is a spiritual process. In their words: "as in the religious examples, we mean to use attention normatively … in the sense of "mindfulness as the Buddhists put it, an openness to the leadings of God, as the Quakers say" (Bellah et al. 1991: 256).

The problem with the Habermasian discourse ethics is also its strength, namely its emphasis on rationality. Rationality is an important starting point, but there are problems when it is made the be all or end all in life, as it is in the approach of Habermas. Habermas strongly believes that it is a rational philosophy of science that is not scientistic which holds the key to the overcoming of the confusion in which moral consciousness finds itself today (Habermas 1981).[9] But though Habermas distinguishes between instrumental reason and communicative reason and is an ardent critic of modern positivism, his communicative rational agenda still has its limits in coming to terms with the challenge of transforming moral awareness into a basis of transformative communicative action. Bernard Williams's argument in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* is of crucial significance here: "How truthfulness to an existing self or society is to be combined with reflection, self-understanding and criticism is a question that philosophy itself cannot answer. It is the kind of question that has to be answered through reflective living" (Williams 1985: 200). To be fair to Habermas, Habermas himself is aware of the need for reflective living but not sensitive to its manifold dimensions.

Moral issues raise questions which are not merely rational but also spiritual. This is a point argued by two important interlocutors of our times, namely Charles Taylor (1989) and Govind Chandra Pande (1989, 1991), who incidentally come from two different traditions. For Taylor, to speak of moral consciousness is to speak of the qualitative distinction between the higher and the lower desire or scheme of things, a realization which is dependent on spiritual enlightenment.[10]

Moral questions inevitably raise questions of ontology—the nature of the actor and the quality of her depth dimension. Though Habermas makes a distinction between ego identity and role identity and speaks of self-reflection in the context of the therapeutic dialogue of the actors (Habermas 1972a, 1972b, 1979), he does not address the question of ontology, vis-à-vis moral consciousness. In this he seems to be carried away by the modernist preference for epistemology over ontology. But Taylor (1989: 7) here urges us to proceed cautiously. For Taylor, "the whole way in which we think, reason, argue and question ourselves about morality supposes that our moral reactions" are "not only 'gut' feelings but also implicit acknowledgements of claims concerning their objects." "The various ontological accounts try to articulate these claims. The temptations to deny this, which arise from modern epistemology, are strengthened by the widespread accepting of a deeply wrong model of practical reasoning, one based on an illegitimate extrapolation from reasoning in natural science" (ibid.).

Moral ontology is not confined to spiritual ontology alone but is an important part of it. Moral notion requires a reflective self whose source is spiritual. For Taylor, an inquiry into the sources of the self "is not only a phenomenological account but an exploration of the limits of the conceivable in human life, an account of its transcendental conditions" (Taylor 1989: 32). Govind Chandra Pande also makes a similar argument. For him, "it is only a self which is conscious of its ideal universality that can distinguish values from appetites, pleasures and selfish interests and can become the moral subject. It is the question of the ideal self which is the source of the moral law on which social unity and coherence depends. The ideal self is not an abstract transcendental subject in which immediacy and coherence or non-contradiction both coalesce" (Pande 1982: 113). Pande's ideal self is spiritual in its source, actualization, and imagination. Pande draws on the concept of man in the Indian tradition, where it is believed that spirituality is an important dimension of self and identity (see Pande 1985, 1989, 1991, 1992).

But this is also true in traditions of spirituality in the West which, as Taylor argues, have encouraged "detachment from identities given by particular historical communities" (Taylor 1989: 37).

Habermas takes for granted that the sacred has become part of modern rational language; he calls this "the linguistification of the sacred." But this view of the modern condition is colored by Protestant religious experience, where religious engagement is not only subservient to the process of rationalization at work in society but also to the power of the word. Habermas's theory of linguistification of the sacred is based upon a tradition such as Protestantism which privileges words over silence in religious engagement. But this may not be so in the Catholic tradition and certainly not so in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions, where silence is very much part of reflection; in fact, silence is the source of critical reflection and transforming utterances in acts of discourse. Habermasian discourse ethics is based upon a very naïve view of religion and religious evolution in the modern societies. In this context, Robert J. Antonio's critique of Habermas is particularly true of his notion of linguistification of sacred: "the problem of formalism can be overcome, and the true limits of immanent critique clarified, only after all the pseudohistorical baggage is left behind" (1989: 741).

Habermas's discourse ethics is procedural,[11] but is not serious about the preparation required of participants to take part in the procedure and also does not address the question of normative direction. Habermas does not address the ontological preparation required of actors to listen and hear in the process of conversation. It is perhaps for this reason that even such a sympathetic critic of Habermas as McCarthy argues that arguments in which actors are engaged in discourse ethics "themselves remain tied to specific contexts of action and experience and thus are not able wholly to transcend the struggle between Max Weber's warring gods and demons" (1992: 58). This problem can be overcome by opening oneself to spiritual awareness, which would enable the actors to "transcend the struggle between warring gods and demons" (ibid.). Participation in spiritual practice or what is called *sadhana* can and does facilitate this.

As a prelude to arguments to follow, at this point it may be helpful to briefly point out the meaning of spiritual engagement referred to here. It refers to a process of multi-dimensional critical movement. First, it is a process of discovering a higher self within oneself—one which is characterized by more intimate subjectivity. If ethics has to do with the challenge of the other, then spirituality as a transformative seeking of values in

both inner freedom and in more genuine bonds of intersubjectivity helps us to invite the other into the self. If every dialectic inevitably has a process of self-reflection,[12] this is also true of the dialectic of self and the other, and spiritual transformation of the consciousness of actors makes this dialetic more reflective. As Taylor argues of the spiritual point of view, vis-à-vis St. Augustine: "[…] radical reflexivity takes on a new status, because it is the space in which we come to encounter God, in which we affect the turning from lower to higher" (1989: 140). Spiritual transformation also involves transforming the base of society or the infrastructure of society. It requires transforming the structures of society which subjects human beings into indignity and exploitation. Spirituality has a dimension of institutional criticism as well, which is most evident in traditions of prophetic criticism, martyrdom and the Bhakti movements (Giri 1996; Uberoi 1996; Walzer 1988).

From Discourse to Spiritual Transformation

Though Habermas pleads for post-metaphysical orientations in our moral engagement, a careful reading of him shows that he is deeply aware of the limitations of his agenda. He recognizes that his agenda is anthropocentric,[13] but does not explore ways of overcoming the limits of anthropocentrism. Furthermore, while the question of justice is central to his agenda of morality, Habermas does not address whether the pursuit of justice is only a question of socio-political legislation or if it involves, as Agnes Heller (1987) argues, a "profound anthropological revolution." For Heller, pursuit of justice almost always involves an engagement with a "Beyond";[14] also see Giri (1997), Dallmayr (1993, 1995, 1996), Laclau (1992). By "Beyond" Heller refers to something beyond and deeper than mere socio-political legislation. She states quite clearly that "…Beyond has the connotation of higher and not only of being different" (Heller 1987: 325–326). But it is this intimation of the "Beyond" and a transcendental height that is missing from Habermas which has grave consequences for the realization of some of his own objectives, such as the realization of justice and the overcoming of anthropocentrism.

Habermas speaks of the "linguistification of sacred," but does not explore the critical potential that a transcendental sacred has in rethinking existing social arrangements and transforming our conventional institutions which chain human dignity in many guises. In this context, the work of Roberto M. Unger (1987) calls for our attention. For Unger

(1987: 576), there are two kinds of sacred reality. "The first is a fundamental reality or transcendent personal being; the second, the experiences of personality and personal encounter that, multiplied many times over, make up a social world." Though human beings have a tendency to reduce the first sacred reality to the logic of the societal sacred, the transcendental sacred still continues its autonomy and acts as a source of criticism, creativity and transformation.[15] For Unger, when people are only bound to the sacredness of the existing social contexts, "nothing is left to them but to choose one of these worlds and to play by its rules" (Unger 1987: 577). These rules, though "decisive" in their influence, are ultimately "groundless" (ibid.) (also see, Laclau 1992). Unger argues that when the decisiveness of the present social world, presenting itself as a sacred order, "arises precisely from its lack of any place within a hierarchy of contexts" (ibid.), then "there is no larger defining reality to which it can seem as the vehicle or from whose standpoint it can be criticized" (Unger 1987: 577).[16] Habermas's agenda of linguistification of sacred suffers from this problem as well.

It is perhaps for these reasons that Dallmayr does not look at Habermas's "discourses ethics" as a categorical shift from the Kantian deontological morality. "Discourse ethics," Habermas writes, "picks up the basic intent of Hegel's thought in order to redeem it with Kantian means" (quoted in Dallmayr 1991: 117). But for Dallmayr there is no scope for genuine redemption in the Habermasian agenda. For Dallmayr (1991: 126), Habermas "makes reference to the alleviation of suffering or of 'damaged life' but only as a marginal gloss not fully integrated in his arguments." Dallmayr argues that in order to address the questions of justice, suffering, moral responsibility and the self-justification of inhuman social systems as the sacred order, discourse ethics needs a spiritual opening (see, Dallmayr 1995, 1996).

Spiritual Foundations of Moral Consciousness: The Agenda of Sri Aurobindo

Habermas uses rational argumentation as the key to the realization of moral consciousness. But in traditions of spiritual criticisms there is a much more inclusive approach to rationality and morality, which is illustrated in the work of a critic such as Sri Aurobindo (1871–1950). Aurobindo is a multi-dimensional critic of the human condition and is noted for works such as *Human Cycles*, *Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *Future Poetry*.[17] Aurobindo does not discount the significance of

reason for the origin and growth of morality but wants us to have a proper perspective regarding "the office and limitations of reasons" (1962; also see Sri Aurobindo 1953, 1970). Much like Habermas, he argues that reason and rational development have played a key role in our being human.[18] Aurobindo himself argues, reminding us of Habermas, that "an attempt to universalize first of all the habit of reason and the application of intelligence and the intelligent will to life" has played a crucial role in the shift from the "infrarational" to the "rational" age (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 179). He also wants us to appreciate the crucial significance of reason in understanding the validity of traditions.[19]

Like Habermas's plea for undistorted communication, Aurobindo also sensitizes us to the distortion that power can introduce in the working of a rational discourse and the realization of even its inherent emancipatory potential.[20] But for Aurobindo, even though reason is so important for moral development and evolution (both phylogenetic and ontogenetic), it cannot be a sole foundation of morality. Aurobindo accords this role to spirit, not to reason. For him, both order and evolution in life involves the "interlocking of an immense number of things that are in conflict with each other" and discovering "some principle of standing-ground of unity" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 201). Reason cannot perform this function because "The business of reason is indeterminate … in order that it may do its office, it is obliged to adopt temporarily fixed view points"(ibid.). When reason becomes the sole arbiter of life and morality, "every change becomes or at least seems a thing doubtful, difficult and perilous … while the conflict of view points, principles, systems leads to strife and revolution and not to basis of harmonious development" (ibid.). For Aurobindo, harmony can be achieved only when the "soul discovers itself in its highest and completest spiritual reality and effects a progressive upward transformation of its life values into those of the Spirit; for they will all find their spiritual truth and in that truth their standing-ground of mutual recognition and reconciliation…" (ibid.).

For Aurobindo, the inadequacy of reason to become the governor of life and morality lies in man's transitional nature—half animal and half divine. He believes that "the root powers of human life, its intimate causes are below, irrational, and they are above, suprarational."

It is for this reason that "a purely rational society could not come into being and, if it could be born, either could not live or sterilize or petrify human existence" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 114). He (1962: 206) argues that "if reason were the secret, highest law of the universe … it might be possible for him by the power of the reason to evolve out of the

dominance of the infrarational Nature which he inherits from the animal. But his nature is rather transitional; the rational being is only a middle term of Nature's evolution. A rational satisfaction cannot give him safety from the pull from below nor deliver him from the attraction from above." Aurobindo uses reason, but unlike Habermas does not take it as the be all and end all of life. For him, "The solution lies not in reason but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that alone can create a perfect human order. It is spiritual, *a greater than rational enlightenment*, that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seeking, antagonisms and discord" (ibid.; emphasis added).

An ideal society, for Aurobindo, is not a mere "rational society" but a "spiritual society." A society founded on spirituality is not governed by religion as a mere social organization where society uses religion "to give an august, awful and … eternal sanction to its mass of customs and institutions" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 211). A spiritual society is not a theocratic society but a society guided by the quest of the spirit. It regards man not only as a "mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfillment upon earth, not only in heavens beyond, which after all it need not have left if it had no divine business here in the world of physical, vital and mental nature" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 213).

Sri Aurobindo's idea of the highest stage of morality is close to the Kohlberg–Habermas idea of the post-conventional stage of moral development. Like the Habermasian idea of a post-conventional stage of morality, Aurobindo's idea of morality is not an extension of the collective egoism of a particular society. But what distinguishes his idea of morality is invocation of God not only as a tertiary factor but also as a constituting factor in the dyadic relationship between the self and the other. For him (1962: 136), "the seeking for God is also, subjectively, the seeking for our highest, truest, fullest, largest Self." He (1962: 143) argues that "ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in action of a laboured effort to be blameless according to the standards of the world—these are only crude appearances—it is an attempt to grow into divine nature." Let us hear in Aurobindo's own words about the probable more reassuring route towards moral consciousness and communicative action:

> ethics only begins by the demand upon [man] of something other than his personal preference, vital pleasure or material self-interest; and this demand seems at first to work on him through the necessity of his relations with oth-

> ers. But that this is not the core of the matter is shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard. His relations with others and his relations with himself are both of them the occasions of his ethical growth, but that which determines his ethical being is his relations with God, the urge of the Divine whether concealed in his nature or conscious in his higher self or inner genius. He obeys an inner deal, not to a social claim or a collective necessity. The ethical imperative comes not from around, but from within him and above him (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 141).

Beyond the Technology of Power: Spirituality and the Technology of the Self

In his *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Hans Jonas (1984: 141) argues: "it must be understood that we are here confronted with a dialectic of power which can only be overcome by a further degree of power itself, not by quietest renunciation of power." This more power, in Jonas's own view, has to emanate from society and supposedly can break the tyrannical automation of power. Jonas is articulating a point of view towards ethical responsibility which is more widely shared among interpreters and actors today.[21] The crux of this approach lies in the belief that by having more power we can solve the ethical problems confronting us today.[22] But such politicization of morality removes the "inner life from the sphere of the moral," making it impossible to articulate proper moral concepts (Edelman 1990: 53). But a spiritual approach to ethics and morality, as Aurobindo's work shows, brings the "inner life" of the actors to the heart of their moral consciousness and communicative action. Spirituality not only retrieves the inner life of the actors and juxtaposes it to their outer life but also continuously strives to critically scrutinize the structure of desire of the inner life and subject it to transformative criticism. This transformed inner life becomes a source of transformational criticism of the logic of power in society.

Habermas's discourse ethics shares the above-mentioned problems of an approach to morality where the logic of power reigns supreme over the creative desire and the devotional dynamics of the self. Though Habermas makes a distinction between technology of power and technology of self (see for instance, Habermas 1987b), his critical theory in general and perspective on discourse ethics in particular scarcely scratches the surface of technology of self. To be fair to him, he is deeply concerned with the need

for self-reflection on the part of the actors, but he limits this to the context of therapeutic dialogue between the patient and the analyst. Habermas does not explore the possibility of autonomous self-discovery without the mediation of the therapist.

Spirituality here suggests a different route. Spiritual traditions stress that self-knowledge and self-reflection go together. Aurobindo (1950: 2), for instance, proposes yoga as a synthetic mechanism where it "is a methodological effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and Transcendent Existence." Yoga is a practical psychology of self-perfection to help God complete her unfinished task of creation. Its objective is transformation and making possible a higher stage of evolution here on Earth, not individual *moksha* (salvation). Yoga helps us to overcome our "separative ignorance" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 618). The practice helps us to go beyond altruism and egoism, good and evil, where we are able to "take a wider psychological view of the primary forces of our nature" (ibid.). Through the practice of Yoga "there grows an immediate and profound sympathy and immixture of mind with mind, life with life, a lessening of the body's insistence on separateness, a power of direct mental and other intercommunication and effective mutual action which helps out now the inadequate indirect communication and action…" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 615). Yoga enables individuals to have a right relation with the collectivity where the individual does not "pursue egoistically his own material or mental progress or spiritual salvation without regard to his fellows," nor does he "maim his proper development" for the sake of the community but sums up in himself "all its [community's] best and completest possibilities and pour[s] them out by thought, action and all other means on his surroundings so that the whole race may approach nearer to the attainment of its supreme potentialities" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 17).

A spiritual approach to self-reflection, for instance that of Yoga, proceeds with a different relationship between knowledge and human interest or knowledge and power. In the spiritual traditions of practice and inquiry, the aim of knowledge—whether of self or other, or of both—is not to have power over the other but to become an instrument of service and creativity in the genuine growth and development of the other. This creative service begins with enhancing the "functioning" and "capability" of the other,[23] and aims at the spiritual transformation of their consciousness. The urge of the seekers within traditions of spiritual practice and inquiry,

as Rabindra Nath Tagore puts it in one of his poems,[24] is to fulfill one's life through self-sacrifice and presenting oneself as a gift to the other.

The idea of discourse in the traditions of spiritual transformation is different from the over-politically determined view of discourse in modernity. Discourse here is not confined to politically significant utterances nor is it only full of speech acts. In spiritual traditions, silence is also an important part of discourse. It is undoubtedly true that the discourse that the participants in Habermasian discourse ethics are engaged in is not confined to the political; in fact its critical significance lies in the fact that it is carried out in the life world. But in order to realize the search for multi-dimensional criticism such as therapeutic criticism and aesthetic criticism that the participants in discourse ethics are engaged in, there is a need for them to participate in the spiritual dialectic of silence and utterances as well.[25]

It is an integral part of spiritual realization that money and power are not the sole measures of a good life; they must be provided normative direction by the quest for meaning in discovering the depth dimension of one's being and creating bonds of intersubjectivity (see Bellah et al. 1991). This realization affects the technology of self that the actors seek to cultivate. Robert Bellah and his colleagues describe some of these ideally imagined modes of practices and criticism (Bellah et al. 1991). The following critique of consumerism that Bellah and his colleagues provide is an instance of spiritual criticism which bears a lot of suggestions for transformation for the participants in discourse ethics: "Consumerism kills the soul as any good Augustinian can see because it places things before the valuing of God and human community" (Bellah et al. 1991: 211). Bellah and his colleagues also suggest pattern of cultivation as an appropriate mode of being in the world today—a pattern characterized by a spiritual attentiveness to the needs of the others.[26]

By Way of Conclusion: From Practical Discourse to Practical Spirituality

Habermas does not "tie the criterion of rationality to the idea of self-constituting subject of history, he locates it in the basic context of action, in talk between subjects" (Wagner and Zipprian 1989: 103). This is the problem with the Habermasian approach to rationality and morality. The key question is whether we can have such a view of rationality or what he calls communicative rationality and realize the ends that he sets

for himself; adequate motivational development of actors for them to be able to act upon their moral realization as critics and transformers. Can his procedure of rational argumentation actualize his worthy expectation that participants in discourse ethics realize that one who recognizes the interests of others "does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self" (Habermas 1987a: 94)? Realizing these goals requires a wider view of rationality where it is part of the consciousness of actors—a consciousness which is simultaneously rational and supra-rational, rational and spiritual. Habermas (1979: 93) believes that at the highest stage of moral development internal nature is moved into a "utopian perspective." At this stage, internal nature is not subject to the "demands of ego autonomy; rather through a dependent ego it obtains free access to interpretive possibilities" (ibid.). He also hopes that moral consciousness as a kind of critique would terminate in a "transformation of the affective-motivational basis" of actors (Habermas 1972a, b: 234). But my argument in this chapter has been that his rational approach is incapable of realizing these worthy ideals; it has to be supplemented by spiritual praxis.

Habermas speaks of practical discourse. Communicative interaction is the most important part of this practical discourse. This practical discourse can be part of a practical spirituality (Metz 1970; Vivekananda 1991). Practical spirituality, as Swami Vivekananda (1991: 354) argues,[27] urges us to realize that "the highest idea of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest idea of metaphysical conception." This highest conception pertains to the realization that man himself is God: "You are that Impersonal Being: that God for whom you have been searching all over the time is yourself—yourself not in the personal sense but in the impersonal" (Vivekananda 1991: 332). The task of practical spirituality begins with this realization but does not end there: its objective is to transform the world. The same Swami Vivekananda thus challenges: "The watchword of all well-being of all moral good is not 'I' but 'thou'. Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt" (Vivekananda 1991: 353). What practical spirituality stresses is that the knowledge that one is Divine, one is part of a Universal Being, facilitates this mode of relating oneself to the world. This knowledge is not, however, for the acquisition of power over the other; rather it is to worship her as God. In the words of Vivekananda: "Human knowledge is not antagonistic to human well-

being. On the contrary, it is knowledge alone that will save us in every department of life, in knowledge as worship" (Vivekananda 1991: 353).

This plea for practical discourse being part of a practical spirituality has to be understood in the context of emergent contours of religious evolution of our times which point to a new direction. In this direction exists not only religious fundamentalism but also an urge for spiritual realization on the part of believers which is not confined to the religions to which they belong (Giri 1994; Sacks 1991). People of faith also now realize that spiritual realization is possible only through addressing the concrete problems of the men and women who live in their midst. As E.H. Cousins (1985: 7) tells us in his *Global Spirituality*: "people of faith now rediscover the material dimensions of existence and their spiritual significance."

The realization of practical spirituality in the dynamics of self, culture and society is as much a normative ideal as the building of a rational society or realization of a state of undistorted communication. The coming of a spiritual society requires both the "reflexive mobilization of self" (Giddens 1991) as well as the building up of alternative communities which are founded on the principles of practical spirituality. According to Aurobindo, the coming of a spiritual society begins with the spiritual fulfillment of the urge to individual perfection but ends with the building of a "new world, a change in the life of humanity or, at the least a new perfected collective life in the earth—nature" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 1031). "This calls for the appearance not only of isolated evolved individuals acting in the uninvolved mass, but of many gnostic individuals forming a new kind of beings and a new common life superior to the present individual and common existence. A collective life of this kind must obviously constitute itself on the same principle as life of the gnostic individual" (ibid.).

These gnostic individuals are seekers and bearers of the multidimensional transformation of practical spirituality. But these gnostic individuals are not the Nietzschian supermen driven by the will to power; they are animated by a will to serve and desire to transform the contemporary condition and to build a good society. They don't form a type or a caste of chosen people to dominate this world and interpret its urge for meaning. What Connolly (1991: 187) writes so aptly sums up the spiritual seekers who are going to carry forward the task of moral consciousness and communicative action well into the future:

> But this typological differentiation between man and overman no longer makes much sense, if it ever did. For the overman—constituted as an inde-

pendent, detached type—refers simultaneously to a spiritual disposition and to the residence of free spirits in a social space relatively insulated from reactive politics. If there is anything in the type to be admired, the ideal must be dismantled as a distinct caste of solitary individuals and folded into the political fabric of late modern society. The "overman" now falls apart as a set of distinct dispositions concentrated in a particular caste or type, and its spiritual qualities migrate to a set of dispositions that may compete for presence in any self. The type now becomes (as it actually was to a significant degree) a voice in the self contending with other voices including those of resentment.

Notes

1. As Hosle argues, it is "clear that the increasing gap between the First and the Third world raises some of the most difficult moral questions of the modern world" (Hosle 1992: 229).
2. Habermas (1987a: 77) describes for us what he means by linguistification of sacred:

   > The disenchantment and disempowering of the domain of the sacred takes place by way of a linguistification of the ritually secured, basic normative agreement; going along with this is a release of the rationality potential in communicative action. The aura of rapture and the tenor that emanates from the sacred, the spellbinding power of the holy, is sublimated into the binding/bonding force of criticizable validity claims and at the same time turned into everyday occurrence.

   Habermas (1987a: 91), further, tells us about the implications of such an evolutionary shift:

   > Norm-guided interaction changes in structure to the degree that functions of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization pass from the domain of the sacred over to that of everyday communicative practice. In the process, the religious community that made social cooperation possible is transformed into a communicative community striving under the pressure to cooperate.

3. It has to be acknowledged here that there is differing interpretation of the influence of Kant in Habermas. For some, Habermas's categories are less aprioristic than Kant.

4. In this context we might take note of what William Baldamus, an insightful commentator on Habermas, writes. According to Baldamus, "[…] there can be no doubt that Habermas' graphical diagrams are created intuitively. Ironically, in his own terminology this means they have no rational foundation, although in logical terms their credibility may be unquestionable" (Baldamus 1992: 102).
5. According to David Bidney, "An individual is said to be morally free insofar as he acts in conformity with the requirements of his 'true good' and his 'true self.' Moral freedom and cultural freedom don't coincide" (Bidney 1967: 453).
6. In this context, Thomas McCarthy tells us:

   > If taking modern pluralism seriously means giving up the idea that philosophy can single out a privileged way of life…, it does not, in Habermas's view, preclude a general theory of a much narrower sort, namely a theory of justice. (quoted in Habermas 1990a: vii)

7. As Habermas (1990a: 109) writes:

   > Within the horizon of the life world, practical judgments derive both their concreteness and their power to motivate action from their inner connection to unquestioningly accepted ideas of the good life, in short, from their connection to ethical life and its institutions. Under these conditions, problematization can never be so profound as to risk all the assets of the existing ethical life, but the abstractive achievements required by the moral point of view do precisely that.

8. In so far as the need for describing richly the work of intersubjectivity is concerned, the following lines of Richard Rorty are insightful: "Human solidarity is to be achieved not only by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers … the process of coming to see other human beings as 'one of us' rather than as 'them' is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and redescription of what we ourselves are like" (Rorty 1989: xvi).
9. In stressing such an approach Habermas carries forward the agenda of Kant: "Thus when practical reason cultivates itself, their insensibly arises in it a dialectic which forces it to seek aid in philosophy, just as happens to it in its theoretic use; and in this case, therefore as well as in the other, it will find rest nowhere than in a thorough critical examination of our reason" (Kant 1987: 26).
10. For Taylor, "To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing

and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary" (Taylor 1989: 28).

11. In this regard, what Charles Taylor writes is significant: "the modern idea of freedom is the strongest motive for the massive shift from substantive to procedural justification in the modern world… And if we leap from the earliest to the most recent such theory, Habermas's conception of discourse ethics is founded in part on the same consideration. The idea that norm is justified only to the extent that all could uncoercedly accept it is a new and interesting variant of procedural idea" (Taylor 1989: 86).
12. Here we can take note of the insightful arguments of philosopher Roop Rekha Verma. Verma writes: "The dialectic by itself does not explain the possibility of cultural change or critique of culture. What is important to add in this dialectic is that the internalization can be reflective or unreflective" (Verma 1991: 534).
13. Habermas (1990a: 211) himself writes: "compassion for tortured animals and the pain caused by the destruction of the biotopes are surely manifestations of moral intuitions that cannot be fully satisfied by the collective narcissism of what in the final analysis is an anthropocentric way of looking at things." But how do we open ourselves for a dialogue with animals and the natural world while Habermas's "communicative action theory clearly privileges interhuman speech or discourse, while adopting an 'objectifying' attitude to nature"? (Dallmayr 1996: 220).
14. In her view,

    > a just procedure is the condition of the good life—of all possible good lives—but is not sufficient for the good life… The good life consists of three elements: first, righteousness; secondly the development of endowments into talents, and thirdly emotional depth in personal attachments. Among these three elements, righteousness is the overarching one. All three elements of the good life are beyond justice. (Heller 1987: 273)

15. Unger's following argument helps us understand this:

    > Whereas the first of these two sacreds is illusive and disputable and requires, to be recognized, the power of vision which is the ability to see the invisible, the second seems near and palpable. Whenever they can, men and women try to identify the first of these two sacreds with the second. They want to see the social world graced with the authority of an ultimate reality. But the progress of insight and the disclosures of conflict prevent this bestowal of authority. If there is a common theme in the history of human thought and politics, it consists precisely in failure to sustain claims of

> unconditional authority on behalf of particular ways of talking, thinking, living and organizing society. As the two sacreds lose their contact with each other, the distant one fades away into an ineffable, longed for reality without any clear message for understanding and conduct. The nearby becomes profane and arbitrary. (Unger 1987: 576)

16. Prophetic criticism comes closest to the kind of critical engagement that Unger has in mind here. Not only in the traditional past but also in varieties of contemporary societies, criticisms of modern institutions of human indignity such as racism and slavery have been the work of the prophets—whether Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr.—who, it must not be forgotten, have used the name of God to build their movement against forces of oppression. Even in modern critical social movements we are "back to the beginning," to use the words of Michael Walzer (1988), where social critic is a prophet.
17. Sri Aurobindo was one of the pioneers in the freedom struggle of India, and left it quite early in his life for the pursuit of his goal of the spiritualization of humanity. Based in his ashram at Pondicherry, India, Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual companion The Mother have contributed a lot to our understanding of the logic of spiritual transformation as an integral process involving both the individual and society.
18. In his discussion of "the curve of rational age" in *Human Cycles*, Aurobindo argues that "the present age of mankind" is characterized "from the point of view of a graded psychological evolution by an attempt to discover and work out the right principle and secure foundations of rational systems of society" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 181).
19. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (1962: 183):

> Reason can accept no tradition merely for the sake of its antiquity or its greatness; it has to ask, first whether it contains the best truth available to man for the government of his life. Reason can accept no convention merely because men are agreed upon it; it has to ask whether they are right in their agreement, whether it is an inert or false acquiescence. Reason cannot accept any institution merely because it serves some purpose of life; it has to ask whether there are not greater and better purposes which can be best served by new institutions. There arises the necessity of a universal questioning and from that necessity arises the idea that society can only be perfected by the universal application of rational intelligence to the whole of life xxx.

20. In his words: "The reason which is to be universally applied, cannot be the reason of a ruling class: for in the present imperfection of the human race

that always means the fettering and misapplication of reason degraded into servant of power to maintain the privileges of the ruling class. *It must be the reason of each and all seeking for a basis of agreement"* (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 184; emphasis added).

21. In the words of Jonas (1984: 142): "From which direction can we expect this third degree power which reinstates man in the context of his power and breaks its tyrannical automatism? It must, in the nature of the problem, emanate from society as no private insight, responsibility or fear can measure upto the tasks."
22. Ulrich Beck (1992), for instance, argues that it is the collective power of society which can address the ecological crises confronting us today.
23. I use "functioning" and "capability" in the same way as Amartya Sen does. See Sen (1987).
24. A great poet and educational experimenter of modern India, noted for his Noble Prize-winning collection of poems called *Gitanjali*.
25. Professor Robert Bernasconi (personal communication) argues that there are different kinds of silence, and one must not be insensitive to the distinction between self-chosen silence and imposed silence. What spiritual striving seeks is self-chosen silence, aiming at breaking all kinds of imposed silences.
26. For Bellah and his colleagues, "Attending means to concern ourselves with the larger meanings of things in the longer run, rather than with short term pay offs" (Bellah et al. 1991: 273).
27. Another pioneering spiritual seeker of modern India known in the West for his interventions in the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893.

References

Antonio, R. J. (1989). The Normative Foundations of Emanicipatory Theory: Evolutionary Versus Pragmatic Perspectives. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*(4), 721–748.

Baldamus, W. (1992). Understanding Habermas's Method of Reasoning. *History of the Human Sciences, 5*(2), 91–115.

Bauman, Z. (1993). *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

Bellah, R., et al. (1991). *The Good Society*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Bidney, D. (1967). *Theoretical Anthropology*. New York: Shocken Books.

Connolly, W. E. (1991). *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiation of Political Paradox*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cortese, A. (1990). *Ethnic Ethics: The Restructuring of Moral Theory*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Cousins, E. H. (1985). *Global Spirituality*. Madras: University of Madras Press.

Dallmayr, F. (1991). *Life World, Modernity and Critique: Paths Between Heidegger and Frankfurt School*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Dallmayr, F. (1993). *The Other Heidegger*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Dallmayr, F. (1995). *"Rights" Versus "Rites": Justice and Cultural Transformation*. University of Notre Dame, Paper.
Dallmayr, F. (1996). *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Dewey, J. (1960[1908]). *Theory of the Moral Life*. New York: Holt, Rienhart and Winston.
Edelman, J. T. (1990). *An Audience for Moral Philosophy?* London: Macmillan.
Geertz, C. (1986). The Uses of Diversity. *Michigan Quarterly Review, 25*, 105–123.
Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Giri, A. (1994). Religious Resurgence in Contemporary United States: A View from India. *Sociological Bulletin, 43*(2), 177–192.
Giri, A. (1996). *Social Criticism, Cultural Creativity and the Contemporary Dialectics of Transformations: A Poser*. Introductory Statement at the Workshop on Social Criticism, Cultural Creativity and the Contemporary Dialectics of Transformations. Madras Institute of Development Studies, Madras, December 4–7, 1996.
Giri, Ananta. (1997). *Well-Being of Institutions: Problematic Justice and the Challenge of Transformation*. Madras Institute of Development Studies, Working Paper.
Habermas, J. (1972a). *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Habermas, J. (1972b). *Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Habermas, J. (1979). *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity press.
Habermas, J. (1981). *Philosophical-Political Profiles*. London: Hienemann.
Habermas, J. (1987a). *A Theory of Communicative Action*, *Life World and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Polity Press.
Habermas, J. (1987b). *The Philosophical Discourses of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Habermas, J. (1988). Law and Morality. In S. M. McCurrin (Ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Volume VII: Universities of Cambridge and Utah Press.
Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Habermas, J. (1990a). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, J. (1990b). What Does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking in the Left. *New Left Review, 183*, 3–22.
Habermas, J. (1992). *Postmetaphysical Thinking*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Habermas, J. (1994). Overcoming the Past: Interview with Adam Michnik. *New Left Review*.
Heller, A. (1987). *Beyond Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
Hosle, V. (1992). The Third World as a Philosophical Problem. *Social Research, 59*(2), 227–262.
Jonas, H. (1984). *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Kant, I. (1987[1781]). *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics*. Delhi: Orient Publications.
Laclau, E. (1992). Beyond Emancipation. In J. N. Pieterse (Ed.), *Emancipations, Modern and Postmodern*. London: Sage.
McCarthy, T. (1992). Practical Discourse: On the Relation of Morality to Politics. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
Metz, J. B. (1970). Does Our Church Need a New Reformation? A Catholic Reply. *Concilium, 4*(6), 81–91.
Neville, R. C. (1974). *The Cosmology of Freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Pande, G. C. (1982). On the Nature of Social Categories. In R. Kumar (Ed.), *Philosophical Categories and Social Reality*. Delhi, Allied Publishers.
Pande, G. C. (1985). *Aspects of Indian Culture and Civilization*. Varanasi: BHU Press.
Pande, G. C. (1989). *The Meaning and Process of Culture as Philosophy of History*. Allahabad: Raka Prakashan.
Pande, G. C. (1991). Two Dimensions of Religion: Reflections Based on Indian Spiritual Experience and Philosophical Traditions. In E. Deutch (Ed.), *Culture and Modernity*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Pande, G. C. (1992). *Sri Aurobindo: Cultural Perspectives*. Paper presented at the National Seminar on Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry.
Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sacks, J. (1991). *The Persistence of Faith*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
Sen, A. (1987). The Standard of Living. In G. Hawthorn (Ed.), *The Standard of Living*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sri Aurobindo. (1950). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
Sri Aurobindo. (1953). *The Future Poetry*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Sri Aurobindo. (1962). *The Human Cycles, the Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self-Determination*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ahsram.
Sri Aurobindo. (1970). *The Life Divine*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Uberoi, J. P. S. (1996). *Religion, Civil Society and State: A Study of Sikhism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Unger, R. M. (1987). *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Verma, R. R. (1991). The Concept of Progress and Cultural Identity. In E. Deutch (Ed.), *Culture and Modernity*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Vivekananda, S. (1991). *The Collected Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Kolkata: Advaita Ashram.
Walzer, M. (1988). Interpretation and Social Criticism. In S. M. McCurrin (Ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Cambridge; Salt Lake City: Universities of Cambridge; Utah Press.
Wagner, G. R., & Zipprian, H. (1989). Habermas on Power and Rationality. *Sociological Theory, 7*(1), 102–109.
Williams, B. (1985). *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. London: Fontana.

CHAPTER 7

Beyond Sociology: Mysticism and Society

Philip Wexler

Introduction

Sociologists have had remarkably little to say about mysticism. Why this should be so, from a sociologist of knowledge's point of view, may have to do with the long historical wave of secularity in society, but it also derives from the continuing influence of so-called "classical sociology," the reflexive voice of modernity. Durkheim, who defined the central focus of the field as social integration and its paradigmatic methodology as multi-variate social statistics, cared—analytically—deeply about religion, but as cultic performance and collective belief. Magic is intentionally excluded because it is not institutional ("There is no church of magic," in his oft-cited turn of phrase), and mysticism is only an adjectival modifier to the social energies created by collective, ritual assemblies.

It was Weber who addressed mysticism directly, from his interest in the question of meaning. And it was Weber who, in the words of his influential colleague Ernst Troeltsch, assigns to it a "secondary" importance. Unlike Troeltsch, and Gershom Scholem—who follows him closely in this regard—for whom mysticism is secondary to tradition, Weber degrades the social importance of mysticism because it is not the religious foundation of the dominant culture of modernity—rationalization and its apparatus

P. Wexler (✉)
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_7

of experts and specialists. It is worth first quoting Troeltsch (1911/1931) on the meaning of mysticism and its place in religion:

> In the wider sense of the word, mysticism is simply the insistence upon a direct inward and present religious experience. It takes for granted the objective forms of religious life in worship, ritual, myth, and dogma; and it is either a reaction against these objective practices, which it tries to draw back into the living process, or it is the supplementing of traditional forms of worship by means of a personal and living stimulus. Mysticism is thus always something *secondary* (italics added) […]. (Troeltsch 1911/1931: 730–731)

Gershom Scholem, the founding and canonical scholar of Jewish mysticism, quotes Troeltsch approvingly (1967: 2):

> In conformance with Troeltsch's use of the term, I shall use "mysticism" here as meaning the striving for immediacy, inwardness and presence of religious experience, as an awareness of the living experience of the Divine, vouchsafed to individuals living in institutional and traditional forms of religion. I agree with those who see in mysticism a *secondary* [italics added] state of religious development which evolves in visible tension to the traditional forms of religion, in ritual as well as in theology.

For Weber, mysticism is not secondary to institutions or to ideas. Rather, it is, on the roads to salvation," in the words of the American poet, Robert Frost, the "road less traveled by." Soteriology, the salvific, redemptive way, splits between the ascetic and mystic paths, between action and contemplation. As we well know from Weber, the ascetic path, in its innerworldly branch, provided the religious foundation for the culture of instrumental rationality which is the driving force not only of capitalism, but of modern, European civilization. The contemplative path is clearly the minor, religious-cultural theme, since its central tendency is toward flight *from* the world, otherworldliness. Even when it remains within the world, it is either quietistic, having no social impact, or represented by the minority cases of acosmic, universal brotherly love which leads to communities, which, however, are of only passing impact in the rationalizing world, where asceticism has both lost its initial religious meaning and triumphed.

Why it triumphed over mysticism is worth considering for a moment, because it reveals the core causal elements of Weber's theory of religion

and points to the historical reasons that make Weber's theory at once so generally valuable, but particularly, increasingly, causally inappropriate to a changing historical reality.

"Sanctification" is the meaning of the social action of salvation religions. And, as Weber explains;" *Self-deification was the prevalent goal of sanctification*, from the beginnings of the soma cult of intoxication in ancient Vedic times up through the development of sublime methods of intellectualist ecstasy and the elaboration of erotic orgies…" (emphasis added).This primordial goal of religious action, as the focus of sacred practice, namely self-deification, becomes displaced, both by the need for a more permanent, state of sacred grace than is afforded by ephemeral orgiastic ecstasy—which is to say, the elementary, microcosmic form of the routinization of charisma, or rationalization—and secondly, the changing conception of divinity. It is again worth quoting Weber, in a condensed statement of what is a more general dynamic of the core elements of his sociological theory of religion (1968/1978: 536):

> As the process of rationalization went forward, the goal of methodically planned religious sanctification increasingly transformed the acute intoxication induced by orgy into a milder but more permanent *habitus*, and moreover one that was consciously possessed. This transformation was strongly influenced by, among other things, the particular concept of the divine that was entertained. *The ultimate purpose to be served by the planned procedure of sanctification remained everywhere the same purpose which was served in an acute way by the orgy, namely the incarnation within man of a supernatural being and therefore of a god. Stated differently, the goal was self-deification. Only now this incarnation had to become a continuous personality pattern, so far as possible.* […] *But wherever there is a belief in a transcendental god, all-powerful in contrast to his creatures, the goal of methodical sanctification can no longer be self-deification* […]. *Hence the goal of sanctification becomes oriented to the world beyond and to ethics. The aim is no longer to possess god, for this cannot be done, but either to become his instrument or to be spiritually suffused by him. Spiritual diffusion is obviously closer to self deification than is instrumentality*…. (emphasis added)

Recognizing Mysticism

Mysticism is less and less now a "secondary" aspect of religion. A variety of empirical survey researches (Heelas 2008: 233–235) show how the inwardness and direct experience elements of mysticism have become

more socially prevalent. Wuthnow's (1998) social transition from a religion of dwelling to a spirituality of seeking, Forman's "grassroots spirituality" (2000), "unchurched mysticism" and Heelas's (2008: 19) "inner-life spirituality," which present empirical evidence of the shift from "traditional" "institutional" aspects of religion, all reflect what Troeltsch early on described (1911: 31):

> The active energies in mysticism of this kind can become independent in principle, contrasted with concrete religion; they then break away from it and set up a theory of their own which takes the place of the concrete religion and its *mythos* or doctrine … mysticism realizes that it is an independent religious principle; it sees itself as the real universal heart of all religion, of which the various myth-forms are merely the outer garment. It regards itself as the means of restoring an immediate union with God; it feels independent of all institutional religion and possesses an entire inward certainty, which makes it indifferent towards every kind of religious fellowship. This is its fundamental attitude; it does not vary whether the mystic adheres externally to the religious community or not. Henceforward union with God, deification, self-annihilation, become the real and only subject of religion.

"Mysticism" is beginning to be recognized as a significant topic of study by sociologists, under the rubric, however, of "spirituality." The term-shifting reflects, on the one hand, that inner-worldly mysticism may not be an historically consistent minor aspect of religion; on the contrary, the evidence suggests that the opposite of Weber's view is now the case. Yet, in the separation of the terms, along with the recognition of mysticism, is its forgetting of long traditions, not of institutional religion, but of mysticism itself. Heelas (2008) makes an effort to see in the contemporary "expressivist humanism" of "inner-life spiritualities" a cultural continuity; but it is with British and German Romanticism. He fails to take the further step, shown by M.H. Abrams (1971) and, more recently, Suzanne, who argue for not only the Romantic, but the religious origins of aspects of contemporary culture from poetry to psychoanalysis. Late postmodern "spirituality" de-sacralizes religion; though I suggest that it extracts and recontextualizes from mystical traditions, basic social processes that have become increasingly necessary as mechanisms of constituting society, more generally.

It is not enough to castigate the spiritual and new age appropriations of mysticism as simply cheap deformations, though it is certainly tempting for scholars of mystical traditions. White (2003: xiii–xiv) cannot resist:

"New Age Tantra is to medieval Tantra what finger painting is to fine art… This colonialization and commodification of another people's religious belief system and the appropriation and distortion of its very use of the term 'Tantra, is not only deceptive … New Age 'Tantric sex' is a Western fabrication…"

Collins (2008) is more sanguine about contemporary continuities in mysticism. Indeed, he prefers that term, and follows the Weberian typology in a search for current examples of innerworldly mysticism. Following Tilly (2004), Collins takes a political view of social movements and argues that innerworldly asceticism is all-too evident in authoritarian religion/political movements. There is, in his view, an alternative, in liberalizing and humanitarian innerworldly mystical political movements:

> […] losing the ascetic edge […] a parallel but alternative source of political mobilization that is much more human than the ascetic moralistic reformers. This is mysticism in-the-world… We can see the difference between ascetics-in-the-world and mystics-in the-world both in their worldviews and practices. […] Mystics-in-the-world see the world permeated by holiness. […] they could take another step, and instead of withdrawing from politics, enter the world of politics with their pantheistic vision. […] I suggest that this step was taken by Christian mystics, who created a form of activist politics that is radically humanitarian rather than harsh and moralistic. […] The Franciscans were radical democrats … we go from the example of the Franciscans to the Quakers, to the abolitionists, to the gentle altruistic movements of today…. To explain the conditions for these movements are problems on the agenda for sociologists of the future.

On the other hand, Troeltsch (1911/1931: 797, 817, 818), who analyzed the radical "spiritual reformers" and sects in what he referred to as the "sociological results of modern spiritual idealism," was much less sanguine: "In this respect, Christian Socialism certainly has a mission, although it will scarcely be able to build up the new social order." Like Weber, for Troeltsch, modernity has cast its lot with the other "road to salvation.:" "On the other hand, the social influence of Ascetic Protestantism upon the history of civilization has been penetrating and comprehensive." He observes: "'Spiritual religion' or mysticism is not a product of particular social conditions. It proceeds from other causes…"

Yet he and Weber both suggest that a social class dynamic is at work in mysticism. Troeltsch goes on to note: "its extension depends upon the

existence of classes which live apart from the crude struggle for existence, and can seek spiritual refinement for their own sake…"

Similarly, Weber wrote (1946): "And, in the midst of a culture that is rationally organized for a vocational workaday life, there is hardly any room for the cultivation of acosmic brotherliness, unless it is among strata who are economically carefree."

The contemporary relation of society and mysticism is that mysticism becomes a central constitutive process of society. The importance of mysticism, I want to suggest, lies less in the de-mysticized continuities with a commercialized culture of spirituality, or even the possibility of altruistic inner-worldly mystical social movements. On the contrary, it is not brotherly love, but the mechanism of sanctification through self-deification which again becomes relevant, if indeed the concept of the divine, which is the causal "*primo motore*" for Weber, has again shifted—away from a theistic transcendental divide between the human and the divine. If, on the contrary, there has been a recosmologization of everyday life and a diminution of transcendental conceptions of the divine (Toulmin 1982), then, it is self-deifying, incarnating, immanent divinization and a mysticism of suffusion, which becomes a primary, and not a "secondary," aspect of religion.

Further, this process of self-deification, as a social/cosmic process, offers neither a traditionalization, nor revolution of society, but its reconstitution, as a social mechanism; one that replaces the historic integrative methodology of "socialization." It is indeed "politics," but of a different sort than that described by Collins, which has returned to mysticism, along with the cosmos itself, and which now begins to surpass de-sacralized spirituality. It is both these dynamics of a "new mysticism" of society that I want to explore: the contemporary meaning of self-deifying practices of sanctification and the replacement of socialization as the link between individual and society by a new/old set of methodologies of cosmic, social interaction as its constitutive principle.

New Mysticism

The "new mysticism" is beyond "spirituality." First, it must be said, however, that if sociologists have had little to say about mysticism, scholars of mysticism have had little to say about society. The founder of the academic study of Jewish mysticism, Scholem (1967: 1–3), begins a rare discussion of mysticism and society in this way:

> If we wish to discuss mysticism and society in their mutual relationship there is one astonishing fact which should be pointed out from the outset. In the infinite welter of literature on mysticism which, especially during the last two generations, has taken on quite extraordinary proportions, the *problem of mysticism and society has received but scanty attention*." (italics added)

After indicating some main areas of work in mysticism, Scholem continues:

> Even the history of such developments in different systems and religions has aroused the interest of the historian. The social context of mysticism and its implications, however, have, as far as I am aware, a marginal place in these discussions. On the contrary, we easily discern a tendency to take the phenomena of religious mysticism out of their social context, to isolate them and to stress their alleged basic difference from historical and social phenomena.

After briefly discussing the experiential "life of inwardness," he observes:

> "It is this aspect of mysticism which is so intensely stressed in the theoretical literature of the mystics, and, in its wake, in the contemporary discussions of mysticism where psychology rules supreme." Scholem tries to get beyond what he refers to (1967: 6) as "[…] one of the central weaknesses of the many purely psychological explanations of mysticism," which is the failure to account of the mystic's communication, the "consequences of his rapture" (ibid.: 7), and particularly " the interrelation between the mystic and his social group."

Still, following Troeltsch, he describes the social meaning of mysticism as, in the first instance, a renewal of traditions—we might say today, following, a revitalization movement—which "tend to become stale and worn out." Though he acknowledges a revolutionary possibility, his main example of the relation between mysticism and society is eighteenth century Hasidism, which though it is transformative, and though it has a "radical branch" (p. 20), is a movement of "basically conservative reformers … who thought of it as a nucleus for a renewal of Jewish society in its wider meaning. (pp. 20–21)." The "revolutionary propensities of mysticism" "come to the fore mainly in mystical sects … these sects were of particularly social impact when mysticism combined with Messianism." Here, using Weber's term for charismatic movements, he cites Sabbatian

movements as a Jewish example, and directly following Troeltsch (pp. 23–24): "The many facets of Anabaptism and its later ramifications present the student with instructive examples of the revolutionary turn of mystical teachings. Social forces which at the outset had nothing to do with mysticism used slogans borrowed from mystical teaching, as in the case of Thomas Munzer, and decidedly mystical inspiration entered the social sphere in Quakerism."

The "new mysticism" that I want to indicate is not a marginal, sectarian phenomenon, coded messianically or not, that Troeltsch described in terms of the Protestant spiritual reformers and radical sects; that Scholem adapted to Hasidism and Sabbatainism; and which Weber relegated to a past, culturally emptied by rationalization, and whose prophetic, future reappearance—as a mass phenomenon—is clearly deferred. Rather, in an historically changed context, the reenchantment of the world is socially less potent in radical, messianic sects, although they exist, than in an alteration of the religious foundations of the mainstream, secularized culture. That is what Heelas (2008) is trying to describe and to explain in terms of what he now refers to as "spiritualities of life" (2008). This self, inner spirituality, which is manifested in a variety of mainstream institutional domains, including health, business and education, defines the emergent culture. This culture is a contemporary version of Durkheim's "religion of humanity," in which, according to Heelas's analysis of the data, (2008: 126), "…the ethic of humanity is widely abroad within New Age spirituality of life circles"; "…the ethic can be experienced as functioning as an inner—directed, that is expressivist, form of the Durkheimian sacred." Spirituality is new age Romanticism, and its causes are to be found in processes of cultural continuity and diffusion.

I have tried to explain the socially salient emphasis on inner experience and "boundless being" not as a continuity with Romantic culture, or even as a renewal of traditional mystical cultures, but as a broad, de-centralized social movement which develops in response to contemporary, social structural conditions. In "Mystical Society" (Wexler 2000) I took a Marxist approach, following Manuel Castells and David Harvey, and extended their analysis (particularly against Castells's emphasis on "fundamentalism" as social re-anchoring), understanding the social structural de-bounding of institutions which is homologously reflected in the de-bounding of the experiential self, to be an effect of changes in forces of production. Informational technology induces a mystical informationalism, which may be seen as a revitalization movement, since it draws on

mystical traditions from within the classical religions, but which, more deeply, alters the basic terms of the culture: a technologization of Sorokin's sensate, materialist premise that has reached its limit.

"Spirituality" does not go far enough to capture the incipient phenomenon—which is neither the marginal sectarian renewal of traditional religious movements, nor the de-transcendentalized, individualist expressivism of religious yearning. Rather, the meaning of "the social" itself is changing; not simply cultural belief or institutional boundaries or personal attitudes, but the nature of social relationality. This change was heralded, in my view, by the founder of American psychology William James, and more recently by the philosopher Stephen Toulmin.

As I argued in a recent paper on "Micro-sociology and Mysticism," James is increasingly acknowledged as a founder also of modern social science, particularly through his influence on Dewey and Mead. At the same time, James's social psychology and micro-sociology were de-spiritualized and de-mysticized. I am referring not only to the denial of James' s "spiritual self" or the incontrovertible importance which he attached to psychic phenomena, and of the marginal as being only ephemerally subliminal and always potentially central (1910: 92 "We shall not understand these alterations of consciousness either in this generation or the next," he wrote in his 1910 paper "A Suggestion about Mysticism"). Rather, I am referring to James's late interest in the interpersonal and the social. Against the de-mysticization of James in American social science—while lauding his contribution—he, himself, was swimming against the tide of his own earlier materialist assumptions and drawing the implications of such a reversal for theory and practice.

James wanted to define the social cosmically. "From a pragmatic point of view," he wrote (2007: 14) in his last book, *A Pluralistic Universe*, "the difference between living against a background of foreigness and one of intimacy means the difference between a general habit of wariness and one of trust. One might call it a social difference, for after all the common *socius* of us all is the great universe whose children we are. If materialistic, we must be suspicious of this socius, cautious, tense, on guard. If spiritualistic, we may give way, embrace and keep no ultimate fear."

In a parallel vein, though now well into the twentieth century (1982: 12), the eminent philosopher of science Stephen Toulmin aims to describe and understand what he calls a "return to cosmology." He writes: "Thirty years ago, the separateness of different intellectual disciplines was an unquestioned axiom of intellectual procedure, and the obstacles to

thinking of the natural world in other than strict, disciplinary terms was still very substantial." He goes on to discuss (ibid.: 13) the rise of an interdisciplinary organization of knowledge and its contextual meaning: "at least it made it possible to reopen, in a serious spirit, questions about the cosmological significance of the world picture… So the disciplinary specialization of the natural sciences can no longer intimidate us into setting religious cosmology asides as 'unscientific.'" Toulmin sees the "task of constructing a conception of the 'overall scheme of things'" as part of the development of a "new cosmology" (ibid.: 17). In his discussion of "green "and "white" philosophies, Toulmin (1982: 262–269) draws comparisons between classical antiquity and contemporary intellectual movements, emphasizing the internal, inner-looking search for psychological meaning and transformation, and the outer, ecological orientation.

Implied, but undeveloped in James and Toulmin, is a redefinition of the meaning of social relationality, of social interaction, to include a wider "universal" screen, reaching inward and outward, beyond the meaning that symbolic interactionism in sociology has given to the symbolic. There, what is symbolic, what is "other," are the embodiments and ethical standards of a "community," the "generalized other," which is taken as an advance on individualist psychology. Likewise, in Durkheimian, Functionalist sociology, society is constituted by an integrative process which Dennis Wrong (1961) described in his famous phrase critique of the model that links the individual and the collective through the internalization of shared norms and values as the "oversocialized conception of man in modern sociology."

Instead of either of these tacks—symbolic interactionism and functionalism—as the theoretical subject and, instead of either Durkheimian inner-life culture or Marxist technological de-boundarying as the object of understanding—I want to take the cosmological perspectives of James and Toulmin not only seriously but historically, as social facts and as the basis of social explanation. Contemporary social interactional life, as Emerson (1940/1950) put it in the middle of the nineteenth century, always has, beyond the evident dyadic interactants, a "third party." Symbolic interaction needs to be understood as "cosmic interaction."

If we return to the sociology of knowledge vantage-point with which we began, contemporary academic religious studies and mass cultural interest in dynamic models of cosmic interaction both explain and represent historical changes in the meaning of social life and in the methods of societal reintegration or constitution. The thresholds, screens and filters of

consciousness which James saw as marginal, but reducible and permeable, have been lowered, its walls breached in theory and practice.

This hypothesized shift in the nature of social life occurs in an historical context. I want to suggest that the move toward a cosmic type of interactionism occurs simultaneously with the revision of the social, toward a new model of politics, and a resexualization of academic social understanding and everyday mass practice—which demonstrates that an alternative to "repressive de-sublimation" of eros is now part of the social imaginary.

What has brought politics, sex and the cosmos back to social life is, I think, not only the technologically instigated triumph of flow over form, to use Scott restaging of Simmel. Indeed, Simmel's understanding of "The Conflict of Modern Culture" is between "life" and form, but especially as enacted in the religious yearning of mysticism (Simmel 1997: 20–21)." Mysticism appears to be the last refuge for religious individuals who cannot free themselves from all transcendental forms, but only, as it were temporarily, from those which are determined and fixed in content." (ibid.: 23) "I wonder," he wrote, "whether the fundamental will of religious life does not inevitably require an object. … (p. 23) we are moving toward a typical cultural change, the creation of new forms adapted to contemporary forces…"

While Weber's religious typologies, including that of mysticism, are best known in the corpus of his sociology of religion, Weber was primarily an historical sociologist. It is in this historical sociology of religion that he offers an important clue, which takes us beyond the cultural and the technological, beyond the alternation of flow and form, to see mysticism politically.

Politics, Sex and the Cosmos

Historically, the quest for religious salvation is a political quest, undertaken as a *compensation* for a political loss. For Weber, religious creativity is induced by the loss of power:

> The development of a strong salvation religion by socially privileged groups normally has the best chance when demilitarization has set in for these groups and when they have lost either the possibility of political activity or the interest in it. Consequently, salvation religions usually emerge when the ruling strata, noble or middle class, have lost their political

> power to a bureaucratic-militaristic state. The withdrawal of the ruling strata from politics, for whatever reason, also favors the development of a salvation religion […]
>
> The Near Eastern salvation religions, whether of a mystagogic or prophetic type as well as the oriental and Hellenistic salvation doctrines, whether of a more religious or philosophical type of which lay intellectuals are the protagonists, were insofar as they included the socially privileged strata at all, virtually without exception, the consequence of the educated strata's enforced or voluntary loss of political influence and participation […]. (Weber 1968/1978: 503–504)

Weber observes further that "such modes of thought (religious salvation) tend to lead a kind of underground existence, normally becoming dominant only when the intellectuals have undergone de-politicization" (ibid.).

My suggestion is that a "new mysticism" arises at the conjuncture of this de-politicization, the continuing intensification of the "cult of the individual" and a reduction in the transcendental system of theistic belief in favor of inner-life spirituality. When, as Weber explained, in the forking of paths between asceticism and mysticism there is a transcendental gap between the divine and the human, the earlier social technology of sanctification as self-sanctification, or more specifically self-deification or divinization, become less possible. But under conditions that combine loss of power, a changing conception of divinity that de-transcendentalizes divinity and makes power both personal and inward, and where individualism has no limits, so that divinization appears on an endless horizon of acquisition, then pre-modern mysticism returns, albeit in de-traditionalized and de-contextualized forms. This de-contextualization and de-textualization in the new mysticism is what arouses the ire of scholars of medieval Hinduism such as David White (2003) and Gavin Flood (2006). Yet, simultaneously, it is the demand for this social technology which revises traditional forms of mysticism and raises the level of interest in earlier, medieval models of empowerment.

Hollenback's redefinition of mysticism makes empowerment into one of its central aspects:

> My third objective—and this is one of the most unusual aspect of this study—is to draw attention to the importance of *enthymesis*, or what I have I termed "empowerment" of thought, will, and imagination as a significant process that shapes visionary landscapes, ensures that a mystic's experiences

> will seem to confirm empirically the truths that his religious tradition proclaims in its myths or scriptures, and transforms the imagination and will into "organs" of supernormal perception. (Hollenback 1996: 26)

Individualistic empowerment and de-centered divinity are made even more salient with the "return to cosmology." In this return, the earlier models of divinization are reactivated, along with a renewal of the imaginal and envisioning senses.

Of course, one may argue that current scholarly interests are entirely removed from historical, social and contextual concerns. Yet the search for models of reconstituting the destroyed sociality of modern commodification and rationalization also leads to the renaissance of an academic "new mysticism." Among those models, it is Kabbalah and Tantra which garner the widest audiences. They present a cosmological order of a much wider domain of symbolic interaction that induces empowerment and vitality. In Boaz Huss's (2007) analysis of the "new age of Kabbalah," there is an efflorescence of a new mysticism which fuses ancient traditions and contemporary preoccupations:

> During the 1970s and 1980s, and especially from 1990 onward, traditional kabbalistic *yeshivot* and Hasidic movements became more active and new Kabbalah and Neo-hasidic institutes, synagogues and study groups were established, mostly in Israel and in the United States. In the last three decades, thousands of people have been studying and practicing various forms of Kabbalah, hundreds of books about Kabbalah have been published and numerous Kabbalah related webpages can be found on the Internet. (Huss 2007: 109)

Jonathan Garb contextualizes, in a way reminiscent of Weber's more general thesis, suggesting the importance of empowerment in social history, when he concentrates on the relation between Kabbalah and Jewish history:

> On a broader level, the focus on power in twentieth century Kabbalah should be examined in the context of the transition from classical to modern Jewish thought. In Jewish diasporic experience, a schism evolved between the belief in an omnipotent God who bestowed some of his power upon his Chosen People and the political and military reality of inferiority and impotence. This disparity between faith in an absolute power and an historical reality of powerlessness generated a "compensatory discourse," in which

> hidden forms of power of a magical or theurgical nature could be activated through Jewish ritual or through the Hebrew language. This discourse helped redress the Jewish people's sense of powerlessness through focusing on its privileged access to supernatural power. The kabbalistic doctrine played a key role in this process. (Garb 2009: 38)

Garb goes on to assert that "Religious Zionism saw the empowerment of the Jewish people as an affirmation—not a negation—of divine power" (ibid.: 39). Analyzing the circle of the Rav Kook, Garb cites R. David Kohen:

> I am magnificent, a divine power sweeps through me. A power of courage and strength, a power of salvation of His right hand. Just by remembering this I ascend to sublime heights. […] The power of God is within me. (ibid.: 43)

Even self-abnegation becomes a "passive model" of empowerment in the Kabbalah of the Rav Ashlag. Along with the personal psychologization of modern Kabbalah, Garb argues that the textual tradition itself changes: "[…] there has been a significant transition form a curriculum based on the study of Halakha to one based on the study of mystical texts … Kabbalah and Hasidism, one could say, have usurped the place not only of the study of Mussar, but also of the analytical study of Talmud as foci of spiritual enlightenment" (ibid.: 105).

In his book on *Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah*, Garb opens the field of practices of deification from internalized identification with God to an "imaginal geography" (Henri Corbin) and an architectural model, and, following Wolfson (2005: 12–122) to a "process of spiritual entities assuming corporeal form within the imagination…" He quotes Wolfson and cites Idel (p. 113 in Garb) "on the shared 'as-if' mode of imaginary ascent, in which the practitioner visualized himself as present in the supernal worlds." (Wolfson 2005: 194; Idel 2005). As Garb puts it, "the route to revitalization is the recovery of a more archaic consciousness, which is closely related to the elements, such as air and fire" (2009: 66).

From our point of view, medieval cosmologies become the map of a recosmicized set of social interactions. The deep ascents and descents across worlds described by Moshe Idel (2005) are the expanded field of cosmic social interaction in an emergent new mysticism. New age "culture" is supplanted by more conscious borrowings from medieval

cosmology and the social order in what is now an imaginal order, a symbolic interaction with "others" who are both supernal figures and potencies, but certainly something different and more variegated than the symbolic community other of sociology, or the internalization of shared values that derive from transcendental, ethical commands. The "imaginal geography" becomes channeling, angelology and an incredible "corporealization of spiritual entities that appear in television series and Hollywood movies for the masses, to say nothing of literary, "fictional," cosmologies.

In his critique of Scholem, Moshe Idel moves away from the ideational to the performative, so that the imagined universes are not theological constructs, but methods of energic performative practices. He writes of "what may be described as the theologization of Kabbalah in Scholem's writings and in those of his followers" (Idel 2005: 19).

"Unlike this propensity to understand Kabbalah as theology, I will try to emphasize in the following chapters some other, and more experiential, aspects of this mystical lore" (ibid.: 37). While he makes a general assertion, "The processes of interiorization of mythical modes of thought resorting to the new forms of spirituality are part and parcel of many developments in religion…," he offers as a more particular observation:

> Rabbi Vital combines this language with a certain theory of imagination that is not, however, entirely Aristotelian… Due to the influence of some forms of Sufism, the role of the imaginary faculty is highlighted. Events are described as taking place in the imagination and in a place described as "the world of images." (ibid.: 53)

Idel goes on to describe various modes of ascension and angelization and, significantly, also descents. Against Weber's view of mysticism as divided between other-worldly and inner-worldly, in the Kabbalah of Idel, Wolfson, Garb and Abrams (2004), mysticism is neither. It is between worlds, dynamic, relational and empowering. This Kabbalistic imagination de-centers the Divine into a divine process, in which the righteous elite, and then broader social constituencies, are emplaced, in an interaction that is transformative, even while it is symbolic. The renewed interest in such interactional models may have its scholarly roots, but it represents a change also in the everyday episteme, of at first those "economically carefree" classes who practice, again, the sanctification of the self, to "become as Gods."

Along with the reverse theurgic empowerment of Kabbalistic ascents, which are at once in the world and across its boundaries, as Wolfson has argued for almost twenty years (2005), and as Idel has more recently asserted (2005) and as Abrams emphatically describes, in an embodied reading of sexuality and the "Divine Feminine," sexualization as well as empowerment characterizes the cosmic interactional field of contemporary Kabbalistic interpretation. We have already noted White's complaint about the fabricating Westernization and distortion of Hindu Tantra, and the same may become increasingly true of sexualized readings of Kabbalah. Yet, within Kabbalah scholarship, Charles Mopsik makes explicit the connection between divine sexual dynamics and the emplacement of this—worldly relations, which are not only sexual, but more broadly social, within the ambit of divine dynamics. He writes (2005: 20): "The relationship within the couple is taken as the ideal type of social relationship." He describes: "The bisexual model of the world of emanation, the divine structure is reflected on the human level" (ibid.: 34). As he specifies it: "These two sefirot (Tiferet, the son and Malkhut, the daughter) thus form two gendered poles whose phases of union or disunion set the pace for the internal dynamics of the emanative structure, then spread to the angelic cosmos and from there to the world of man" (ibid.: 64). And, more directly: "The divine world and the world of man is organized along fundamentally identical principles" (ibid.: 124).

In medieval Hindu Tantra too, these cosmologies of divine coupling are about the much wider dynamics of cosmic forces and their constitutive power for human being. White (2003: 97) cites a medieval text:

> Desire (kama) is the root of the universe. From desire all beings are born… Without Siva and Sakti creation would be nothing but imagination. Without the action of *kama* there would be no birth or death. The king represents a template (p. 125) "…the prime channel of communication between the upper and lower worlds—between the human, the divine, and the demonic—which he keeps 'open' through the mediation of the religious specialists." He is "a pivot between heaven and earth, the microcosmic godhead incarnate."

Gavin Flood (2006) reasserts the essential contextualization of Tantra within traditional scripture and ritual, arguing for the "entextualization" of the body in Hindu Tantra (here reminiscent of the role of the letters and the body in Hebrew Kabbalah). Here too, "The Tantras are dialogues

between the main deity of the tradition and his/her spouse or sage. Tantras focused on Siva are presented as dialogues between him and his Goddess or Sakti" (Flood 2006: 53). There is an imaginative, cosmic, symbolic interaction: "Inhaling the image, it pervades the adepts's body from the thighs to the knees and is dissolved into its mantra, then into the energy of taste which he emits through the exhaled breath" (ibid.: 113): "It is perhaps in the divinization process that we see the particularity of the contextualization of the variable indexicality that constitutes subjectivity in these traditions" (ibid.: 145). Further; "Of particular importance are the purification and divinization of the body, in which we see the textual representation of the cosmos mapped onto the body and cosmological temporality of vast periods of the manifestation and contraction of the cosmos enacted in the microtemporality of daily ritual time" (ibid.: 6). "This corporeal understanding shows itself in the great emphasis on transformative practices in the tantric traditions, ritual inseparable from vision, the body becoming alive in the universe within it, and vibrant with futurity in the anticipation of the goal of the tantric path."

Reconstituting Society

In both empowerment and sexualization, in the academic and popular domains, we can see the fulfillment and specification of James's and Toulmin's expansion of horizons and its implication for a much wider definition of the meaning of sociality. However, not only can the social be understood as interaction with imagined and corporealized supernal figures, and the inclusion of the physical elements of the universe, along with the spiritual/mystical, in the interactive process, but what is revealed is also a different social "mechanism." I think we can begin to see how Wrong's (1961) critique of "socialization" as the key mediating process between individual and society is being replaced by this wider "cosmic interactionism." The internalization model of socialization is, I suggest, a secularized version of "*imitatio Dei*." An authority figure represents moral values that are acquired by identification with the external force of power. Weber argued that the sacred version was no longer possible, not only because the nature of transcendental conceptions of the divine created an unbridgeable gap between the human and divine, but also because societal rationalization had made the divinized figures less accessible (1946: 357): "Under the technical and social conditions of rational culture, an imitation of the life of Buddha, Jesus, or Francis seems condemned to failure

for purely external reasons." Both centralized, sacred *imitatio Dei* and secularized socialization became less socially effective with the long-wave of modern destruction—the chronicling of which is the other side of classical, modern sociology. Not individualism, but anomie. Not material progress, but alienation, commodification and exploitation. Not efficient rationality, but de-magification and de-personalization.

We can see how the new/old social relations of cosmicization can lead to the reconstitution of subjectivities and to a broader field of micro-social interactions. What is less clear is the implication of such changes for the character of the macro-structure of society. I agree with Simmel (1997), that mysticism signals a social transition and "religiosity" rather than "religion," ("spirituality," rather than mysticism) means that new social forms—I would say social structures—have not yet crystallized. In terms of Alberoni's theory of social movements, we are in a "nascent state," with regard to the formation of institutions: "It is, therefore, a transitional state, and it appears when there is a failure of those forces which constitute social solidarity. In such a case, solidarity is reconstructed beginning from certain points in the social system having quite specific properties. Broadly speaking, the nascent state is a proposal for reconstruction made by one part of the social system" (Alberoni 1984: 20). Further on, he explains: *"The nascent state is an exploration of the limits of the possible within a given type of social system, in order to maximize that portion of experience and solidarity which is realizable for oneself and for others at a specific historical moment"* (ibid.: 20–21).

I understand "spirituality" as aim-inhibited mysticism, analytically and, historically, as a precursor, though still continuing parallel, to the appearance of a "new mysticism." The new mysticism revives the ancient models and is more radical because it not only asserts an alternative set of moral principles or norms, but because it embodies and enacts a different practice of sociality. Indeed, my hypothesis is that the supercession of spirituality by mysticism indicates a different socially constitutive dynamic, both in theory and practice.

The sociological theory of spirituality, as most consistently articulated by Paul Heelas, is a cultural theory, abstracted from the historical dynamics of production, class, politics and sexuality. Moreover, it operates within the framework of the present cultural imaginary, the taken-for-grantedness of materialist individualism—though it very much registers the Romantic protest, and reaches out, from its core of socio-cultural continuity, to an alternative way of being in the world. Yet, in its reinforcement not only of

Durkheim's "religion of humanity," but also of his "cult of the individual," it occludes the possibility of recognizing not only changes in the content of culture, but a deeper alteration in the constitutive social mechanism.

If sociologies of spirituality are too constricted, so also are traditional and renewed theories of mysticism. For, while Scholem's call for a study of the social "context "of mysticism is surely an improvement against the continuing academic, scholasticism of the cult of textualization (beneath the shield of philological scholarship), it repeats the very psychologization of mystical experience which it decries. For it accepts the duality of individual and society, where mystical "experience"—no matter whether theologized or ritualized—belongs to the individual, who may be influenced and in turn also influence, his "social group," "radiating" to the wider "social context."

This duality enables us to deny both that mysticism is a social relation, and that what is changing socially are not simply cultural values, but the very constitutive principles of contemporary, historical society. To put it simply and boldly, both individualism and culturalism, as explanations, are historically inappropriate to an emergent world in which the meaning of society itself is changing. Against the "end of the social views," which argues the triumph, albeit dissentingly, of informationalization, or the supercessation of persons by the objectivization of social relations, the view presented here is that the social is being transformed in cosmicization. Within such a wider, transformed social field, mysticism comes to the fore as a societally central social relation. The character of mysticism, as described in classical Kabbalah and Tantra,—their interactive dynamics of emanations and divine corporealizations, embodied entextualizations of classical mystical beliefs and practices—reveals itself to be—now, more evidently, because of the expansion of the meaning of the social horizon—a fully social relation.

Society becomes more mystical and the modern, individualist, psychological ideology of mysticism fades in the face of its evident social character. The "inwardness" of mysticism represents the "coagulation" of a moveable social field of transworldly social relations. Mysticism is a social process, which is temporally and spatially differentially and variously located, included both the inwardness, which, from Troeltsch forward had been seen as its defining attribute, and its sometimes existence in a relational, interactive, dynamic social field that represents its "external" positioning.

Even further, this social relation, which is more characterized by the surfacing of states of being that modernity called "altered" or, in James's time, "psychic," which is characterized by the entextualization of mystical myths, dogmas and theories and their transworldly interaction represents the new socially constitutive principle, at least in its nascent state, of societal integration, or "solidarity." Mysticism becomes, in the language of Functionalist sociology, a "functional pre-requisite" of the social system.

Its systemic value as a socially integrative principle is also entailed by its internal, generative logic, which Mopsik (2005), playing on the priority which he assigns to gender and sexual difference in his reading of Kabbalah, calls "engenderment." That is, it is a dynamic, interactive process which is continually pro-creative. Its creativity is lodged in the organic, living character of sexuality itself, as we see in the work of Wolfson (2005) and Abrams (2004) and not only in the combinations and permutations of gendered differentiated emanations, or "sefirot."

The "new vitalism" which finds in adding "reflexivity" to flow, Marxizing Simmel, as it were, and returning Critical Theory to the information society, is a materialist vitalism. So too, is the "molecular vitalism" of theories of nanotechnology as a new.3 view of self-organizing systems (Bensaude-Vincent 2009). Instead, the transitional nascence of cosmicization stands against "socialization" and its more temperate versions in theories of social identity and symbolic interaction as the central constitutive principle for that organized aggregation and crystallization of movement which we still call "society." Unlike charisma, which is an evanescent antidote to the triumphant petrification of asceticism's rationalizing, prolific heir, mysticism carries a deeper, longer-run promise of installing a living, organic vitality of continuous creativity as the emergent social principle. Yet, in this historically familiar struggle, between materialism and spiritualism, sociological gnosticism cannot forget the power of even a cosmicized world to—in Weber's phrase—turn everything into stone. Still, it keeps open the possibility of an organic, social supernaturalism as a "revolutionary force in history."

References

Abrams, M. H. (1971). *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revelation in Romantic Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Abrams, D. (2004). *The Female Body of God in Kabbalistic Literature*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press. (in Hebrew).

Alberoni, F. (1984). *Movement and Institution* (P. C. Arden Delmoro, Trans.). New York. Columbia University Press.

Bensaude-Vincent, B. (2009). Self-Assembly, Self-Organization: Nanotechnology and Vitalism. *Nanoethics, 3*, 31–42.

Collins, R. (2008). The Four M's of Religion: Magic, Membership, Morality and Mysticism. 2007 H. Paul Douglass Lecture. *Review of Religious Research, 50*(1), 5–15.

Emerson, R. W. (1940/1950). *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited with a Biographical Introduction, by Brooks Atkinson, Foreward by Tremaine McDowell. New York: The Modern Library.

Flood, G. (2006). *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Garb, J. (2009). *The Chose Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth Century Kabbalah*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Heelas, P. (2008). *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Hollenback, J. B. (1996). *Mysticism: Experience, Response, and Empowerment*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Huss, B. (2007). The New Age of Kabbalah: Contemporary Kabbalah, the New Age and Postmodern Spirituality. *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies, 6*(2), 107–125.

Idel, M. (2005). *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

James, W. (1910). A Suggestion About Mysticism. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods, 7*(4), 85–92.

James, W. (2007). *A Pluralistic Universe*. Chennai: Tutis Digital Publishing.

Mopsik, C. (2005). *Sex of the Soul: The Vicissitudes of Sexual Difference in Kabbalah*. Los Angeles, CA: Cherub Press.

Scholem, G. G. (1967). Mysticism and Society. *Diogenes, 15*(58), 1–24.

Simmel, G. (1997). *Essays on Religion*. Edited and Translated by Horst Jurgen Helle in collaboration with Ludwig Nieder.Foreward by Phillip E. Hammond. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tilly, C. (2004). *Social Movements, 1768–2004*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Toulmin, S. (1982). *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Troeltsch, E. (1911/1931/1960). *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (O. Wyon, Trans., 2 vols.). New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Brothers.

Weber, M. (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, Edited and with an Introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weber, M. (1968/1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Ed., 2 vols.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
Wexler, P. (2000). *Mystical Society: An Emerging Social Vision*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
White, D. G. (2003). *Kiss of the Yogini:'Tantric Sex' in Its South Asian Contexts*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Wolfson, E. R. (2005). *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination*. New York: Fordham University Press.
Wrong, D. (1961). The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology. *American Sociological Review, 26*(2), 183–193.
Wuthnow, R. (1998). *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

CHAPTER 8

Confucian Self-Transformation as an Alternative Sociology: Meaningful Action vs. Performance with Differential Profundity

Wei-Hsu Lu

Most sociologists agree that human conduct is the subject matter of sociology, but how to study human conduct sociologically is still controversial (Anderson et al. 1985: ix–xii, 121–143; Benton and Craib 2001: 1–12).

The most prevalent approach may be positivism. Positivists urge social researchers to treat social facts as things and, thereby, study human conduct by finding and testing causal laws as physicists study the motion of physical objects. Using data from surveys, sociologists who adopt positivism strive to uncover and examine the structures, social forces, or cultural values that, they assume, determine people to act in this or that manner. They typically explain human conduct, as physicists explain the motion of physical objects, in terms of statistical relationships among independent, dependent, and control variables (Prus 1996: 3–8, 205–208; Hughes and Sharrock 1997: 1–75; Benton and Craib 2001: 13–27; Steinmetz 2004: 373–381).

There are many anti-positivist approaches. The primary one is interpretativism. Interpretativists criticize positivism for overlooking the

W.-H. Lu (✉)
East China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, China

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_8

fundamental feature of human beings; that is, human beings, unlike other kinds of beings, have free will or subjectivity, which gives meanings to their conduct and organizes their conduct according to these meanings. Owing to this fundamental mistake, interpretativists do not accord positivist sociology the scientific status claimed by positivists. Moreover, interpretativists assert that human conduct, as meaningful action which is different from the motion of physical objects, should be studied through intersubjective understanding. The primary method for interpretativist sociology is ethnography, including participant observation, open-ended interviews, reading materials written by those people under investigation, and so on. Interpretativists usually try to learn the intersubjective meanings people under investigation attach to their interactions, and then to describe these people's conduct in terms of these meaning (Prus 1996: 8–21, 208–209; Hughes and Sharrock 1997: 96–142; Benton and Craib 2001: 75–118).

Basically, I agree with interpretativists' critique of positivism. When positivists advise sociologists to study human conduct as physicists study the motion of physical objects, they, in effect, recommend premature scientism. Nevertheless, in my view, interpretativist sociology also has a problem unnoticed by current anti-positivist approaches. The philosophy of free will or subjectivity in interpretativism conceals the phenomena of "differential profundity (差異境界)." In order to reveal the missing phenomena, this chapter will introduce an alternative way to study human conduct, namely an approach informed by Confucian self-transformation (修身). In this alternative sociology, human conduct is regarded neither as the motion of objects nor as actors' meaningful action, but as lived persons' performance with differential profundity.

Before I elucidate what I mean by "performance with differential profundity" and why interpretativist sociology overlooks it, a review of Schütz's and Blumer's programs, which have been very influential in interpretativist sociology, may be helpful. Thus, the plan of this chapter is: (1) to summarize Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism; (2) to illustrate the phenomena of differential profundity with two examples of the table game, Go, so as to show the blind spot in Schütz's and Blumer's projects; and (3) to give a preliminary answer to the question why Confucian self-transformation has the potential to equip us with a distinct approach to the study of human conduct as lived persons' performance with differential profundity.

Schütz's Phenomenological Sociology

It is fair to say that the goal of Schütz's whole sociological career was to create a philosophical foundation and methodological clarification for Weber's unsophisticated "Verstehen" and "ideal types," designed for social research to grasp the subjective meanings of people's interactions. Schütz reached this goal by performing a phenomenological analysis of the structure of the everyday life-world, by designating this life-world as the subject matter of all social sciences, and, finally, by proposing methodological principles to investigate it scientifically.

In order to elucidate what he meant by grasping the subjective meanings of people's interactions, Schütz conducted a highly complex phenomenological explication, influenced mainly by Husserl, of the structure of the everyday life-world. His first step is to analyze the solitary Ego's experiences of the world. In my view, the pith of his analysis, as shown in Fig. 8.1, is that the Ego's lived experiences can be divided into two theoretical forms, the "immersed" and the "detached." The former refers to the irreversible stream of duration in which the Ego encounters only an undifferentiated flowing continuum of experiences. Each "Now" is different from its predecessor because within the Now there is also the predecessor contained in elapsed "retention." The Now is also surrounded by empty "protention" oriented toward the future. However, while the Ego immerses itself in and lives through this stream of pure duration, it does not "know about" this duration at all. The second form of the Ego's experiences of the world is detached "reflection." Reflection is detached in that the Ego withdraws from the living Now and freely directs its Act of attention to its past or future. The Ego has "recollections" when casting the light of reflective glance toward certain parts of its previous stream of duration. Furthermore, it can have "anticipations" by turning the light of reflection toward its future. In the Act of reflection, the Ego's experiences becomes the "objects" of attention, and these objects are apprehended,

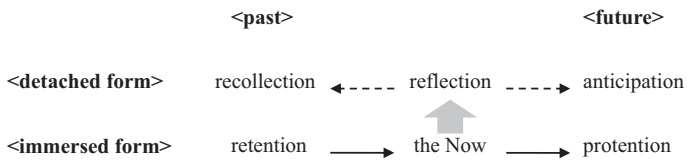

Fig. 8.1 The Ego's experiences of the world in two forms

distinguished, brought into relief, and marked out from one another. Schütz argued that some streams of pure duration called "absolute personal privacy" cannot be captured by memory and, thereby, cannot be brought to light by reflection. Moreover, he emphasized that only detached reflective experiences have meanings because the concept of meaningful experiences always pre-supposes that the experiences on which meanings are based are discrete ones (Schütz 1967: 45–63).

For Schütz, the above analytical dualism of the Ego's lived experiences in general can be applied to the Ego's experiences of its own activity in particular. I use Fig. 8.2 to illustrate this application. When the Ego immerses itself in the irreversible stream of duration, it experiences its own activity as "behavior." Behavior, while it is actually taking place, is a pre-phenomenal experience, namely an experience which is constituted in the transition from one Now to the next Now. Only when behavior has already taken place can part of the behavior experience be singled out as a discrete item. In other words, the beam of the Ego's detached reflection can only be aimed at immersed behavior from a later vantage point. When performing this detached reflection, the Ego can constitute a meaningful discrete unity from part of its previous behavior; that is, an "act in the past perfect tense" or a "genuine because-motive." Symmetrically, the reflective Ego can have a meaningful discrete unity of a project toward its future; that is, an "act in the future perfect tense" or an "in-order-to motive." In addition, any behavior which is guided by a reflective act as its map is called an "action." A projected act is the goal of a series of living actions and is brought into being by these actions. It follows that whenever we mention "the meaning of an action," we must refer to its corresponding projected act or motive (Schütz 1967: 53–63, 86–96).

For Schütz, detached reflection has multiple levels: a unity of a phenomenal meaning at the next-higher level of the pre-reflective

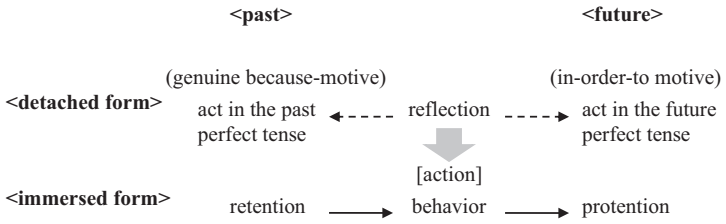

Fig. 8.2 The Ego's experiences of its own activity in two forms

pre-phenomenal stream of duration, a meaning-context (or meaning-configuration) as a higher synthesis gathering separate phenomenal meanings into an "object," a higher and more complex meaning-context constructed out of individual meaning-contexts, and so on. The particular kind of attention the Ego gives to its lived experiences may penetrate into the lived experiences on different levels. Some of them are deeper than others. Schütz defined the concept of the "taken-for-granted" as the particular level of experiences which presents itself as not in need of more investigation. Whether a level of experiences is taken for granted depends on the pragmatic interest of the Ego who operates a particular kind of reflective attention from a particular Here and Now. In an Act of "strictly philosophical reflection," the Ego can carry an analysis of the origin of all meaning-contexts and can rediscover the previous constitution processes of them down to the rock-bottom level of the Ego's pure duration. Nevertheless, in the "natural attitude" toward everyday life, objects or meaning-contexts are always taken for granted. Although they are at a higher level of configuration which consists of lower levels of configurative elements, these lower strata are out of the Ego's Act of attention. Schütz coined the term the "scheme of experiences," a terminology which refers to a configurative meaning-context of the Ego's past experiences conceptually embracing the objectivity of the meaning-context but not the process by which it was constituted. All schemes of experiences the Ego passively possesses in a particular Here and Now of everyday life compose the "stock of knowledge at hand." Unless some trouble appears, the Ego uses its stock of knowledge at hand, which presents itself as taken-for-granted, to interpret what the Ego has already lived through (Schütz 1967: 71–86).

Obviously, the above analysis of the solitary Ego's experiences of the world is not enough to be a philosophical foundation of a sociology, since any "society" pre-supposes the existence of other Egos. However, unlike Husserl, Schütz had no interest in finding transcendental solutions for the questions of "how the Thou is constituted in an Ego" and "how universally valid intersubjective knowledge is possible." For him, intersubjectivity is "the fundamental ontological category of human existence in the world and therefore of all philosophical anthropology" (Schütz 1975: 82). He asserted that in the natural attitude, the Ego takes for granted the existence of other Egos just as it takes for granted the existence of natural objects, and that the Ego assumes the Thou as another Ego. Moreover,

Schütz believed that all his analysis of the solitary Ego's experiences of the world can be applied to the Thou's experiences (Schütz 1967: 98).

How do the I, as the Ego, and the Thou, as another Ego, understand and interact with each other? Schütz argued that the Ego can never comprehend the "intended meaning" of another Ego because such comprehension requires that the Ego is to interpret another Ego's lived experiences in the same way as another Ego does. Only if the I and the Thou were the same person, would the I be able to comprehend the intended meaning of the Thou. Nevertheless, the inaccessibility of another person's intended meaning denies neither the possibility of understanding another nor that of an interpretive sociology. In fact, the crucial point is that the meanings that the I gives to the Thou's experiences cannot be precisely the same as the meanings that the Thou gives to them when the Thou proceeds to interpret them (Schütz 1967: 98–99). In order to analyze this meaning-establishment between two Egos and their social interaction based on it, Schütz, again, used the theoretical dualism of the immersed and the detached as a tool to start his job.

Schütz claimed that in its immersed form of experiences the Ego and another Ego can "live through a common stream of duration" and "grow older together" if the two Egos are in a "face-to-face situation," namely a situation in which the two Egos encounter each other with spatial and temporal immediacy. It means that the two Egos can synchronize their intentional Act. This synchronization of streams of duration between two Egos in face-to-face situations is important for Schütz's conception of social interaction. He argued that the Ego that is interacting with another Ego should anticipate the in-order-to motives of its own action as the genuine because-motives of the expected action of its partner, and that the Ego should be prepared to regard the in-order-to motives of its partner as the genuine because-motives of its own action. Moreover, only in face-to-face situations can the two Egos' streams of duration totally gear into each other and immediately affect each other. Only in face-to-face situations can the in-order-to motive of one Ego and the because-motive of another Ego become interlocked to a great extent, and can complement, revise, and validate each other (Schütz 1967: 162, 165, 167–172, 1973a: 23–26).

Apparently, the Ego's "direct" experiences of others in face-to-face situations do not exhaust all forms of its stock of knowledge about the social world. Most of its knowledge of others is "indirect" or is without spatial and temporal immediacy. Some indirect knowledge comes from the Ego's own past experiences of others; some comes from the ver-

bal descriptions of them given by a person to whom the Ego is talking in a face-to-face situation; some comes from cultural objects (Schütz 1967: 182).

Various sources of the Ego's stock of knowledge lead us to Schütz's analyses of Other-orientation and meaning-endowment. For him, the Ego can orient toward the other Ego in two analytically opposite manners: "Thou-orientation" and "They-orientation." Accordingly, the Ego can also endow meanings to all human products, including human conduct, language, and artifacts, in two analytically opposite ways: "subjective meaning" and "objective meaning." In the cases of Thou-orientation or subjective meaning, the Ego pays attention to the constituting Acts of the other Ego, which has its own unique lived experience at each moment. The Ego sees the other Ego's products as the indication of what went on in the other Ego's mind when the products were being made. By contrast, in the cases of They-orientation or objective meaning, the Ego disregards the other Ego's uniqueness and thoroughly subsumes its experiences of the products of the other Ego under its own interpretive schemes at hand. Therefore, the Ego focuses its attention on the products as objects and as independent of their maker. Rather, the objective meaning of any human product is abstracted from its every subjective meaning. This interpretive abstraction is done by leaving everything personal about the other Ego out of consideration and by treating the other Ego as anonymous or typical (Schütz 1967: 133–135, 163–164, 183–184).

Schütz believed that his polar opposition between Thou-orientation and They-orientation, or that between subjective and objective meaning, can be a heuristic principle to illuminate the Ego's interpretations of its social world. According to this principle, the Ego's interpretive schemes of its social world can be treated as ideal-typical in terms of increasing degrees of anonymity and objectivity, from "characterological type," "habitual type," "social collectives," to "artifacts." The Ego's experiences of its social world have a multi-form structure with respect to different degrees of spatial and temporal directness: "the world of directly experienced social reality," "the world of contemporaries," "the world of predecessors," and "the world of successors" (Schütz 1967: 139–214).

As mentioned, when the Ego is in the natural attitude, it is in an intersubjective world. The Ego naïvely accepts the existence of other Egos in its everyday life. Although the Ego cannot comprehend the intended meanings of other Egos, it can understand them by ideal types with different degrees of anonymity. In Schütz's view, as long as it interacts with its

"fellow-people" in an "in-group," the Ego, whenever applying its ideal-typical stock of knowledge at hand to everyday business, either neglects personal differences or takes these differences as evidence to support the legitimacy of its ideal-typical knowledge. The former refers to "the reciprocity of perspectives." The Ego overcomes the personal differences by taking for granted—and assuming its partner does the same—that it and its partner shall see things as another does if they exchange spatial standpoints with each other, and that the differences in perspectives resulting from its and its partner's unique biographical situations are irrelevant for their purpose at hand until counterevidence occurs. The latter pertains to "the social distribution of knowledge." The Ego takes into account that the stock of knowledge at hand differs from individual to individual. Anyone may be an "expert" in a narrow domain and a "layperson" in many other areas. The Ego constructs its types of others' expertise according to the individual differences of knowledge and, thereby, knows with whom and under what typical circumstances it has to consult as a competent specialist (Schütz 1973a: 11–15). To sum up, normally the ideal-typical stock of knowledge of the Ego, as a person among fellow-people, is stable and common for all members in the in-group, and is shared, consented, verified, and controlled by them.

Schütz analyzed the above everyday life-world as commonly experienced by the Ego and its fellow people so as to designate this life-world as the subject matter of all social sciences. Unlike the exponents of logical empiricism (or positivism) and behaviorism, he disagreed that the methods of the natural sciences should be applied to the study of human affairs to develop explanatory social theory which disregards the subjective viewpoints of social actors. In his view, the everyday life-world is the social reality of the social sciences, and the purpose of the social sciences is to get substantive, organized knowledge of this social reality. If the social sciences aim at getting knowledge of social reality, they have to develop particular methods foreign to the natural sciences, and they must deal with an actor's action in terms of its subjective interpretation of the action. Thus, the methodological concern of every social science can be summarized in the question of how a social scientist constructs objective concepts and a scientifically verifiable theory of actors' subjective meaning-structures (Schütz 1973a: 34, 1973b: 48–55, 58, 62, 1976: 4–5).

Schütz claimed that everyday construction of anonymous ideal types provides the primary answer to the above methodological question.

There is no sharp boundary between the knowledge which we gain in everyday life and that which we gain in the social sciences (Schütz 1967: 220–221). The only difference is that whenever creating a scientific theory of the life-world, a social scientist does not take the "natural attitude" but the "scientific attitude," in which one is merely a radically detached observer of a sphere of the social world under study. One does not have the "Here" or "Now" in the world one is studying. One does not have any practical interests in this world but only cognitive ones. One's "biographical situation in the social world under study" is superseded by one's "scientific situation," which is guided by the disinterested quest for truth according to the pre-established rules in a scientific community. By taking the scientific attitude, the social scientist replaces the thought objects of common sense relating to unique events and occasions by creating a model of the sphere of the social world in which only typified events relevant to one's particular scientific problem occur. One constructs a model of an actor, namely a puppet, and ascribes to this puppet fictitious consciousness which consists of typical motives and typical actions on typical occasions. Thus, this puppet is not a human living within its biographical situation in the everyday social world; it has no freedom; it cannot choose its own actions; it is created and manipulated by the social scientist as a tool for one's scientific problem. The scientific puppet is perceived as interrelated and interacting with other scientific puppets. Eventually, all these puppets with perfectly interlocked typical motives and typical actions on typical occasions form a higher level of scientific model of social collectives (Schütz 1973a: 36–38, 40–43).

As a final point, Schütz believed that a scientific model of human actions grasps the social reality and is objective and verifiable, as long as it is constructed by a social scientist following these principles: (1) the postulate of subjective interpretation—the social scientist must base one's model on the interpretations in the minds of the subjects under investigation; (2) the postulate of logical consistency—the scientific model must be established with the highest degree of clarity and be fully compatible with the principles of formal logic so that it can be verified by other fellow scientists in a scientific community; (3) the postulate of adequacy—the scientific model must be understandable for real actors under study and for their fellow people in terms of their shared knowledge within their common life-world (Schütz 1973a: 44).

Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism

Blumer coined the term "symbolic interactionism" in order to provide ontological and methodological justification for a social research tradition of field studies. The gist of symbolic interactionism is that people give meanings to their settings, acting toward those settings on the basis of the meanings they give to them, and that any study of people's group life shall be grounded on meaningful interactions done by the people under study. Blumer articulated his idea by proposing a social ontology deriving mainly from Mead's thought, and then by elucidating its methodological implications for social and psychological research.

The core of Blumer's social ontology is Mead's concept of the "self." In Blumer's view, this concept means that a human being can be an object of one's own action. On the basis of what one is to oneself, one acts toward oneself and directs oneself in one's actions toward others. One's self as an object arises from social interactions in which other people are presenting a person to one. In order to see oneself as an object, one has to see oneself from outside; that is, from the position of others. One has to view oneself or act toward oneself by taking the roles of others. The role-taking ranges from the roles of discrete individuals, through those of discrete organized groups, to those of abstract communities (Blumer 1969: 12–13, 62–63).

For Blumer, the fact that a human being has a self is crucial because it follows that one can interact and communicate with oneself. As shown in the previous paragraph, this inner self-communication pre-supposes a process of interpreting outer situations; that is, taking the attitudes of social and physical objects and deciding appropriate responses to those attitudes. A human being must actively take into account various things one notes and must actively plan a line of action on the basis of one's interpretations and recognitions of those things. Therefore, it is wrong to see human action as a merely passive response to factors playing on them or operating through them. Unfortunately, many social and psychological theories adopt this wrong perspective (Blumer 1969: 15–16, 64–65).

Blumer did not deny the fact that some human interactions such as reflex responses are immediate and unreflective responses to each other's action. This kind of interaction is "non-symbolic interaction." However, he asserted that it is "symbolic interaction," a kind of interaction involving interpretations and reflections, which occupies the central place and importance of human group life. Symbolic interaction consists of a

presentation of a gesture and a response to the meaning of the gesture. People interpret the gesture as a meaningful symbol referring to the intention and plan of forthcoming actions, and organize their actions on the basis of their interpretation (Blumer 1969: 8–10, 65–66). Blumer agree with Mead that "the meaning of the gesture flows out along three lines: it signifies what the person to whom it is directed is to do; it signifies what the person who is making the gesture plans to do; it signifies the joint action that is to arise by the articulation of the acts of both." Any confusion or misunderstanding along one of the three lines of meaning impedes interactions and blocks the formation of joint actions (Blumer 1969: 9).

In short, the social ontology of symbolic interactionism consists of three premises: (1) people give meanings to things and act toward those things on the basis of the meanings they give to them; (2) the meanings of those things arise out of one's social interactions with one's fellows; (3) there is an interpretative process when one applies the meanings to the things one encounters (Blumer 1969: 2).

As mentioned, Blumer criticized many social and psychological research schemes for ignoring or downplaying meaningful social interactions. These research schemes tend to treat human conduct as the results or products of particular factors, such as various kinds of psychological elements, cultural values, and social structures. They do not take into account the meanings of things toward which one acts, or merely see these meanings as a neutral link between initiating factors and resulting conduct (Blumer 1969: 2). Symbolic interactionism adopts a radically distinct position; that is, human society, no matter how complex it is, exists in individuals' meaningful interactions.

Blumer stressed that symbolic interactionism is not only a philosophical doctrine but also a workable approach designed for the empirical social sciences to generate verifiable knowledge of human society. By the empirical social sciences, he meant that there is an empirical world which is "available for observation, study and analysis," and which is "the testing ground for any assertion made about the empirical world" (Blumer 1969: 21–22). Moreover, he defined that the full scope of scientific investigation should include: (1) the possession and use of a prior picture or scheme of the empirical world under study, (2) the asking of questions of the empirical world and the conversion of the questions into problems, (3) the determination of the data to be sought and the means to be employed in getting the data, (4) the determination of relations between the data,

(5) the interpretation of the findings, and (6) the use of concepts in the five components above (Blumer 1969: 24–26).

This definition of social science looks like the positivistic definition. Nevertheless, Blumer accused mainstream quantitative research of being limited by harmful preoccupations: the devising and using of advanced statistical techniques, the construction of logical and mathematical models, the elaboration of formal schemes on how to construct concepts and theories, the application of imported schemes such as input–output analysis and system analysis, the conformity to the canons of research design, and the promotion of a particular procedure, such as survey research as the method of scientific study. In his view, these preoccupations are caused by prevailing methodological myths, such as adhering to a pseudo-scientific protocol, engaging in the replication of studies using the established protocol, relying on testing indecisive hypotheses, and employing absurd operational procedures to give concepts empirical reference and validation. He blamed quantitative methodologists for their failure to outline the principles of how schemes, problems, data, relations, interpretations, and concepts are to be constructed in the light of the distinctive nature of the empirical world; that is, the features claimed by the above social ontology (Blumer 1969: 26–28).

According to the ontology of symbolic interactionism, what people experience and do when they engage in their respective forms of living composes the empirical social world. Thus, this ongoing social world covers the large complexes and variety of activities and relations between participants. Blumer found that researchers, at the beginning of a study, usually lack a firsthand acquaintance with the sphere of group life they want to study. Thus, they tend to see this sphere of life through some pre-established images they already have. These images may come from their own lives, academic theories, and their conceptions of how the empirical world must be set up to allow them to perform their research procedures. If researchers are guided by a conscientious and continuous effort to test and revise their images, their initial outsider viewpoints do not impede their study. However, in prevailing quantitative research, the theoretical positions and the canons of scientific procedures are held as always true and sacred. The images from these sources dominate researchers' study and shape their picture of the sphere of group life they study. As a result, researchers' pre-established images, theoretical concepts, and fixed research procedures substitute for the testing and revising of their picture

by firsthand familiarity with the sphere of group life. To make matters worse, researchers who do not have the firsthand acquaintance are usually not aware that they are missing anything (Blumer 1969: 35–37).

In order to return to the empirical social world and get close to the ongoing human group life, Blumer, taking his inspiration from Darwin's biological study, advocated an alternative research approach called "naturalistic investigation," which consists of two parts, "exploration" and "inspection." The aim of exploratory study is: (1) to allow researchers to get close and comprehensive familiarity with the sphere of group life they propose to study, and (2) to help them to develop and sharpen their study so that their directions, problems, data, analytical relations, interpretations, and concepts arise from and remain grounded in the empirical world under study. Blumer emphasized that exploration is flexible. Researchers may use any ethically allowable methods, such as participant observations, listening to conversations, interviews, reading diaries and letters, and group discussions to get a clearer picture of the area of social life they are studying. Moreover, they must be constantly alert to test and revise their picture. Eventually, researchers should go beyond what their informants know so as to see the sphere of study in new ways. It means that they need "inspection" as the second part of naturalistic investigation (Blumer 1969: 40–42).

In Blumer's view, the construction of a close and comprehensive description of what takes place in the area of group life is not enough. He asked naturalistic investigation to form a theory which includes analytical concepts and relations among these concepts. Inspection is a procedure to link such concepts and relations to concrete empirical instances. Blumer complained that theoretical concepts in social science are too vague and imprecise in their empirical connotation. If one tries to pin down the empirical meaning of commonly used concepts of the social sciences such as mores, integration, social role, alienation, socialization, attitude, value, anomie, and deviance, one finds it is difficult to say securely what their empirical examples are. Therefore, analytical concepts in the social sciences need improvement in their empirical meanings. The procedure of inspection subjects such vague concepts to their empirical instances, views these instances in their different concrete settings, compares one instance with others, sifts out the generic nature of these instances, and, thereby, enriches the empirical meanings of these analytical elements and relations (Blumer 1969: 42–46).

Performance with Differential Profundity and the Blind Spot in Schütz's and Blumer's Programs

What do I mean by "performance with differential profundity?" It is not possible to answer this question by giving a simple definition. Roughly speaking, I coin this term in order to compare and contrast it with the term "meaningful action," stressed by Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism, and in order to point out a blind spot in the two programs. A more sophisticated clarification of "performance with differential profundity" appears in the next section entitled "A Research Approach Informed by Mencius's Self-Transformation," where Confucian self-transformation is introduced. In this section, I will illustrate it with two examples of Go games, to show readers why Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism are neither interested in nor capable of studying it.

Go, similar to chess, is a table game that was developed in ancient China. Two players play a game on a board by turns.[1] This game is relevant to sociology because it encapsulates many important traits of human social activities. Go players, like those in other kinds of social activities, concern themselves about whether their conduct in their surroundings is appropriate. Therefore, Go boards can be treated as social settings where researchers can easily study players' performance toward each other in detail, since recording and exhibiting the moves of Go games is much easier than recording and exhibiting other social activities.

In the area of Go, the differential profundity of lived persons' performance has much to do with the usual phenomena that players play games at different levels of mastery, and that players endlessly pursue higher levels of mastery with the assistance of other players. The following discussion among a Go teacher and several students in a Go studio is an example of lived persons' performance with differential profundity. The conversation happened while the teacher was teaching all students in the studio by playing a game online before them. In the endgame stage, the teacher (the black side) faced a ko fight, which some students expressed their opinions about. Their discussion revolved around the problem shown in Fig. 8.3.

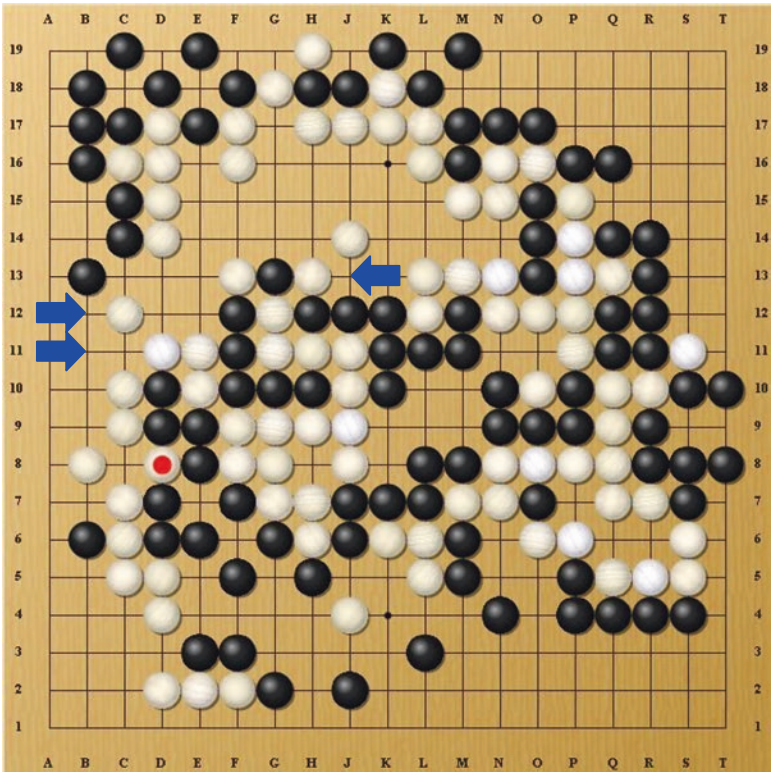

Fig. 8.3 Which move is the best for the black side?

> The teacher said to all students, "It seems that I will not be able to win this ko fight."
> Student B suggested, "You can play there [J13]."
> Student C said, "The value of the move [on J13] may not be big enough."
> Student B replied, "I think it is big enough."
> The teacher said, "The value of the move [on J13] is not big enough. I should play…"
> Student A said loudly, "I think you should play there [B12]."
> The teacher said, "No, it is better to play here [B11]."

Clearly, students A, B, and C and the teacher were at different levels of mastery of the game. While they were facing "the same" situation on

the Go board, they replied to it in different ways. Student B thought the move on J13 was the best reply for the black side; student C had some doubts about that judgment; student A preferred to reply on B12; the teacher finally chose the move on B11 as the best. In other words, they were in "the same" setting but they performed with differential profundity. Moreover, the teacher tried to help the students improve their levels of profundity by exhibiting his own performance in the setting before the students. In this scene of teaching and learning, some interesting questions can be asked. What happened to the teacher and the students with respect to their mastery of Go? Did the students improve their mastery of Go because of the teacher's demonstration? If improvement did happen, did all students reach the same level of the mastery of Go as the teacher had reached? If not, how was the improvement experienced by the teacher and by individual students? These are only some questions among many that may be asked by a researcher who wants to study the phenomena of differential profundity. Nevertheless, none of these questions interest Schütz's phenomenological sociology or Blumer's symbolic interactionism.

Why do Schütz's and Blumer's programs overlook the phenomena of differential profundity? Briefly speaking, it is because both Schütz and Blumer (together with Mead) applied the philosophical concepts of subject and object to their methodological arguments. In Schütz's and Blumer's programs, how persons conduct themselves in social activities is converted into how subjects move their physical bodies to communicate with one another. This conversion from lived persons into philosophical subjects plus their physical bodies is the root of the blind spot in both Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism.[2] In principle, one subject is mentally independent and cannot connect with another subject unless there is some medium between them. In order to deal with the problem of intersubjective communication or the question of what makes mutual understanding and joint actions possible, the theories of shared ideal types and common language were devised by Schütz and Blumer (together with Mead) as the media to link one subject's mind with another subject's mind. In their view, separate subjects can be bridged by their shared ability to constitute a world with common meanings with the assistance of ideal types or language. Furthermore, because of their emphasis on "a single world with common meanings," Schütz and Blumer claimed that researchers can theorize human social conduct and can anchor theoretical descriptions in the very single world

with common meanings. However, if one wants to study the phenomena of differential profundity, as shown in the foregoing instance of Go, one must focus on the differential feature of the mastery of social activities. This focus is thoroughly at odds with interpretativists' emphasis on one world with common meanings. Thus, it is not surprising at all that Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism miss the phenomena.

The other reason Schütz's and Blumer's programs are incapable of studying the phenomena of differential profundity is that they suggested researchers to substitute social conduct with the language descriptions of the conduct. In Schütz's and Blumer's views, social conduct, as meaningful actions, is guided by actors' shared mental constructs and common language descriptions of their actions. The study of social conduct is, thereby, converted into the study of meaningful actions, and the study of meaningful actions amounts to the study of the actors' shared mental constructs and common language descriptions of their action. Nevertheless, this substitution of social conduct with the language description of the

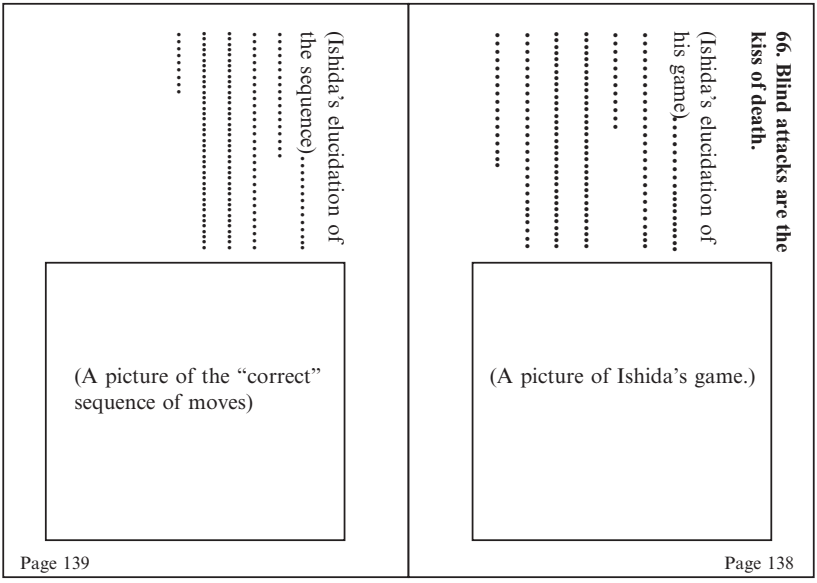

Fig. 8.4 The format of the two pages of the sixty-sixth maxim

conduct becomes untenable as long as we take into account the phenomena of differential profundity. Again, I am going to illustrate my point with an instance of Go.

Go players use words to express their moves on some occasions. For example, Ishida Yoshio (石田芳夫 1989), a Japanese master player, wrote a Go book, called *Collected Maxims with Real Go Games (*實戰格言集*)*. In this book, he collected ninety-seven Go maxims and illustrated every maxim with one game played by him in professional competitions. Figure 8.4 is the format of the two pages of the sixty-sixth maxim, "Blind attacks are the kiss of death." On the right page, Ishida offered a game he (the black side) played with another master player (the white side) and elucidated why the sequence of white moves are "blind attacks" which put the black side in an advantageous position. Then, on the left page, he showed the "correct" sequence of white and black moves. This Go book is a typical case in which the replacement of social conduct with the language description of the conduct recommended by Schütz and Blumer is invalid. Ishida juxtaposed his moves on the Go board and his elucidations of these moves because he knew that for Go amateurs his language descriptions could not substitute for his moves, and because he treated both his descriptions and his moves as incitements to Go amateurs' advances. What impedes Schütz's and Blumer's substitution is the gap between the author at a higher level of the mastery of Go and his readers at lower levels. A researcher who wants to study the phenomena of differential profundity must face this gap and must be interested in questions such as under what conditions the author's descriptions and moves are effective incitements to his readers' advances. Obviously, Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism never pay attention to these kinds of questions.

A Research Approach Informed by Mencius's Self-Transformation

As I said, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce a different sociological attitude toward the study of human conduct, namely a research approach informed by Confucian self-transformation. In this new approach, human conduct is treated neither as the motion of things (in positivism) nor as actors' meaningful interaction (in interpretativism) but as lived persons' performance with differential profundity.

It must be stressed in advance that viewing Confucianism as a singular and homogeneous tradition is problematic because of its historical development, its geographic spread, and its varied dimensions of teachings (Tucker 2004: 7). In this chapter, most intellectual inspiration about self-transformation comes from the teachings of Mencius (孟子), one of the three most important masters in the age of classical Confucianism, ranging from approximately the sixth century BC to the second century AD (王邦雄, 岑溢成, 楊祖漢, 高柏園 2006: 23–24, 53–100).

Mencius's teachings about self-transformation have the potential to equip us with a distinct approach to the study of lived persons' performance with differential profundity because his teachings are not based on any philosophical tradition of subject and object. Rather, his teachings about self-transformation and about lived persons' appropriate performance in their surroundings come from the philosophical anthropology of qi (氣). For Mencius, a lived person is not an isolated subject who contemplates the world and studies other human beings' conduct as the motion of things without thoughts. Moreover, there is no problem of intersubjective communication in Mencius's view. There is no such philosophical theory in which separate subjects are linked by their shared ability to constitute their intersubjective reality or to objectify their common world with the assistance of ideal types or language. Unlike Schütz or Blumer (together with Mead), Mencius did not assert that successful interactions in an in-group or successful joint actions must rely on the conditions that actors successfully express their minds or mental consciousness through their bodies, and that they successfully interpret others' bodily expressions as the indications of minds or mental consciousness. In his view, a lived person's performance toward other persons and things issues from that person's being affected by (感) and replying to (應), the surroundings through qi. Furthermore, one's ability to be suitably affected by and to suitably reply to one's settings can be cultivated, as long as one continually refines the quality of qi flowing through oneself.

Before Mencius's thoughts of self-transformation are introduced, I hope readers can first browse through the following conversation in which Mencius encouraged King Xuan of Qi (齊宣王) to tend to the people[3]:

> The King Xuan of Qi asked, "What virtue is necessary to unify and to harmonize with the world (王)?"
> Mencius replied, "A king unifies and harmonizes with the world by tending to the people. This cannot be stopped by anyone."

The King asked again, “Can a king like me tend to the people?”
Mencius replied, “Yes.”
“How do you know that I can?”
“I heard the following from Hu He (胡齕):

> Your Majesty was sitting in the hall. He saw someone passing below, leading an ox. Your Majesty noticed this and asked, ‘Where is this ox going?’ To which the man answered, ‘The blood of this ox is to be used for consecrating a new bell.’ Your Majesty replied, ‘Spare it. I can not bear to see it shrinking with fear as if it were an innocent person going to the place of execution.’ The man asked, ‘In that case, should the ceremony be abandoned?’ To which Your Majesty replied, ‘That is out of the question. Use a lamb instead!’

I wonder whether this is true?”
“Yes, it is.”
“This sense of compassion Your Majesty had is enough to unify and to harmonize with the world. The people all thought that Your Majesty grudged the expense, but I know it was because Your Majesty was moved by pity for the ox.”
“You are right,” said the King. “There were indeed people who thought that I grudged the expense. Qi (齊) might be a small state, but I was not quite so miserly as to grudge the use of the ox. It was simply because I could not bear to see it shrinking with fear as if it had been an innocent person going to the place of execution that I used the lamb instead.”
“Your Majesty must not be surprised that the people thought you miserly. Since Your Majesty used the small animal in place of the big one, how did they know your feeling? If Your Majesty was pained by the animal going innocently to its death, what was there to choose between the ox and the lamb?”
The King laughed and said, “What was really my feeling then? I replaced the ox by the lamb not because I grudged the expense. But according to your analysis, it was natural that the people thought me miserly.”
“What they said about it did not matter at all. It was the attitude of a benevolent person. Your Majesty saw the ox but not the lamb. The attitude of a gentleman toward animals is: once having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die; once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh. Because of the attitude, a gentleman keeps his distance from kitchens”.
The King was pleased and said, “*The Book of Odes (*詩*)* says,

> ‘The feeling is someone else’s, but I surmise it.’

This perfectly describes you, my Master. For although the deed was mine, when reflecting, I fail to understand its reason. What you say touches my heart then, but why does my feeling of pity have anything to do with the unification and harmony of the world?”

> Mencius replied, "Suppose one person says to Your Majesty, 'I am strong enough to lift the weight of seven hundred kilograms, but I cannot lift one feather; I can see clearly the tip of a tiny hair, but I cannot see a cartload of sticks.' Would Your Majesty believe it?"
> "No."
> "Why is it different in the case of Your Majesty? Your kindness is sufficient to reach animals, but not to reach the people. The feather is not lifted because the person does not lift it; the cartload of sticks is not seen because the person does not see it; the people are not tended to because Your Majesty does not tend to them. In the same vein, the world is not unified by and is not harmonized with Your Majesty because Your Majesty does not do it (不為), rather than because Your Majesty is not able to do it (不能)."[4]
>
> (孟子: 梁惠王上_第7章)

There are three connotations in the above conversation through which I will try to sketch Mencius's thoughts of self-transformation for the purpose of this chapter. First, *trans-individuality*. In Mencius's view, the sense of compassion (惻隱之心) is the beginning of all proper performance (仁之端). Roughly speaking, self-transformation is to continually deepen, enlarge, and extend (擴充/達/推) a person's sense of compassion for others persons and things in the world. Therefore, Mencius first praised King Xuan of Qi for his feeling pity for the ox going innocently to its death. Then, Mencius tactfully led the king to realize that his sense of compassion was not fully developed since he did not yet extend his mercy to the people. As Jullien (2002: 24–26) noted, in the moral philosophy of Rousseau and Schopenhauer, the origin of compassion is an unanswerable mystery, but for Mencius it is never a problem because he adopted the philosophical anthropology of qi, which is transindividual. Mencius did not deny our experience of individuality. However, an individual person is not an isolated or independent subject, but exists in a network of relationships. The world is seen as the flows of qi (氣的流行). All processes in the world incarnate the convergence and divergence of the flows of qi (氣流的聚散).[5] Compassion is transindividual and spontaneous, and has nothing to do with empathy or intersubjective understanding. The sense of compassion occurs to a lived person because there are currents of qi penetrating and touching this person. One is affected by and replies to other persons and things even before one starts to think about one's situation (孟子: 公孫丑上_第2章, 告子上_第8章). This leads us to the second connotation, namely *non-intellectualism*.

Mencius believed that King Xuan of Qi had the potential to tend to the people, but he blamed the king for not doing it. The interesting point is that Mencius said nothing about "free will," which makes correct decisions and causes correct actions. He cared only about whether or not the king "did" correct performance. As I said in the previous section entitled "Performance with Differential Profundity and the Blind Spot in Schütz's and Blumer's Programs," once we believe in the existence of "free will," which makes decisions and causes actions, we can hardly avoid the problems of solipsism and intellectualism. The freedom of will cannot be explained by any causal law in the material world. In order to be free, free will must be the independent mental cause of its own choices (Jullien 2002: 91–97). Therefore, we have the concept of independent subjectivity, and the question of what makes intersubjective communication possible arises. Then, we need the theories of shared ideal types and common language plus the theories of meaningful actions as the media with which to communicate one subject's will with another subject's will. Eventually, we fall into Schütz's and Blumer's programs to study meaningful social actions caused by free wills with the assistance of ideal types and language. We accept that meaningful social actions can be replaced by actors' interpretations and plans of their actions, that those interpretations and plans can be reduced to language, and that the study of social actions amounts to an enterprise based on language descriptions.

When developing his thoughts, Mencius did not use the categorical division between will and action, and he did not treat moral performance as moral actions caused by moral decisions. Mencius proposed another categorical division; that is, one person can be divided into "the parts of greater importance (大體)" and "the parts of smaller importance (小體)" (Jullien 2002: 115–116). For example, one's ears and eyes, as sense faculties (耳目之官), are the parts of smaller importance, which embody the flows of muddy qi (渾濁之氣/體氣), and whose function is blindly affected by and blindly replying to one's surroundings. In contrast, one's xin, as a sense faculty (心之官), belongs to the parts of greater importance, which embody the flows of clear qi (清靈之氣/浩然之氣/夜氣/平旦之氣), and whose function is being properly affected by and properly replying to one's settings. A person who cultivates one's parts of greater importance and never harms them for the sake of one's parts of smaller importance is a great person (大人) (孟子: 告子上_第14章, 第15章). In other words, Mencius believed that every lived person has the innate potential to perform properly, called "intuitive ability (良能)," "intuitive knowing how

(良知)," or a "xin (心)" (公孫丑上_第6章, 盡心上_第15章). While some persons rarely use their xins and eventually allow them to become rusty, others continually practice, activate, and nurture their xins in their everyday activities; that is, they persistently transform and improve the quality of the qi flowing through them (孟子: 告子上_第8章, 盡心下_第21章; Ho Hwang 1979: 207; 王陽明 1992a: 28; 王陽明 1992b: 68, 69; 楊儒賓 2004: 129–172).

The clue to the third connotation in the above conversation is that the range of morally relevant performance in Mencius's teachings is amazingly comprehensive, from feeling pity for the ox going innocently to its death, through tending to the people, and eventually to unifying and harmonizing with the world. For him, morality is not limited to private affairs but is all inclusive, because within his thoughts there is faith in the promising and achievable *union between a lived person and the Dao* (人與道合一). This faith stems from an ancient Chinese thought that, generally speaking, the operation of the whole world embodies the Dao (道), which generates, regulates, equilibrates, and harmonizes with all inexhaustibly changing processes in the world and prevents them from falling into extreme conditions. In about the eleventh century BC the rise of the Zhou dynasty (周朝) promoted the change of faith from the worship of personal gods to the reverence of the Dao. It was believed that the virtue of a ruler who has a heavenly mandate must match the Dao so that the ruler, together with the Dao, generates, regulates, equilibrates, and harmonizes with all processes in the world (以德配天) (張亨 1997: 249–284; Jullien 2002: 85, 86; 王邦雄, 岑溢成, 楊祖漢, 高柏園 2006: 43–47). Mencius stressed that the Dao is accessible to everyone (告子下_第2章). By thoroughly developing one's xin in one's everyday activities, he asserted, one finally becomes the person one is able to become and realizes that this person embodies one's nature (本性) bestowed upon one by the Dao (孟子: 盡心上_第1章). This is also the ultimate level of one's self-transformation, namely the union between oneself and the Dao.

The endless process of seeking the above union gives differential profundity to lived persons' performance in their everyday surroundings. Only at the ultimate level can lived persons' performance become the proper adaption to their circumstances. Such appropriate performance relies not on persons' successful interpretations or expressions of their minds or mental consciousness, but on their ability to be appropriately affected by and to appropriately reply to their settings. It means that in order to reach this ideal level of self-transformation, lived persons must

continually practice their xins and persistently refine the quality of the qi flowing through them to the extent that their performance generates, regulates, equilibrates, and harmonizes with their everyday surroundings as the Dao does.

Our xins, as a sense faculty belonging to lived persons' parts of greater importance, are the key for our self-transformation. Through our xins, we refine the quality of the qi flowing through us, make our performance more and more proper, and eventually access the Dao. Mencius described our ordinary experiences of our xins in the following way:

> If we practice them, then they live (操則存); if we abandon them, then they die (舍則亡). We cannot predict when they come or go (出入無時); we cannot find where they come from or go to (莫知其鄉). (孟子: 告子上_第8章)

And some of his hints on nurturing our xins and on refining the quality of the qi flowing through us are:

> Work at them without rigid objectives (必有事焉而勿正). Do not forget them (勿忘); do not forcibly help them grow (勿助長). You must not be like the farmer in Song (宋). There was a farmer in Song (宋) who pulled at his seedlings because he was worried about their failure to grow … There are some farmers who leave their seedlings unattended, thinking that they can do nothing for them. They are those who do not even weed. There are others who forcibly help their seedlings grow. They are those who pull at them. Not only do they fail to help them but they also harm them. (孟子: 公孫丑上_第2章)

Farming crops was used by Mencius as a metaphor for nurturing our xins. Helpful conditions are arranged by us for the growth of our xins. However, their development cannot be controlled by us. We must let our xins grow "spontaneously" (Ho Hwang 1979: 207, 208; Jullien 2002: 99–101).

"Letting the course of events develop spontaneously (渾然天成)" is also the ideal way a sage (聖人), a person who achieves the union between oneself and the Dao, performs in one's settings. By comparing with this "spontaneousness," we can tell the level of profundity of a specific person's performance. Mencius suggested a series of levels of profundity: shan (善), shin (信), mei (美), da (大), sheng (聖), and shen (神). At the first two levels, shan and shin, one is eager for proper performance, nurturing one's xin hard and performing laboriously. From the third level, mei, to the fourth level, da, one keeps practicing one's xin to transform the quality of the qi flowing through oneself so that one's performance

gives the impression of being competent and brilliant. Eventually, one reaches the last two levels, sheng and shen, at which one performs only by following one's nature (順其本性), bestowed upon one by the Dao so that one's efforts become traceless (無跡), as if one is only letting the course of events develop spontaneously, and at which one generates, regulates, equilibrates, and harmonizes with one's everyday surroundings in accord with the Dao (由道而行) so that the efficacy of one's performance fuses with that of the Dao and becomes "inconspicuous but unlimited (不可測知)" for ordinary persons (Jullien 2002: 167–169; 孟子: 盡心下_第25章; Tu 1985: 94–96).

Further Discussions

In this chapter, I have reviewed Schütz's phenomenological sociology and Blumer's symbolic interactionism, illustrated the phenomena of differential profundity with two examples of Go in order to show the blind spot in Schütz's and Blumer's projects, and given a brief introduction to Mencius's self-transformation, which can equip us with a distinct approach to the study of human conduct as lived persons' performance with differential profundity.

Readers who are interested in this new approach can find more elaborate discussions in my PhD thesis, *Toward a Sociology Informed by Confucian Self-transformation—A Study of Go as the First Step* (Lu 2010). The first part of this thesis is a methodological comparison and contrast between Schütz, Blumer (together with Mead), and Mencius with respect to their conceptions of the "self–other" and "language–conduct" relationships. I exhibited in detail how the philosophy of subject and object constrains the methodological thinking of Schütz and Blumer (together with Mead), making their sociological programs overlook the phenomena of differential profundity. Furthermore, I showed how Mencius's philosophical anthropology of qi differs from the philosophy of subject and object. Finally, I tried to reveal the methodological implications in Mencius's self-transformation and to point out how social researchers may access the differential profundity of lived persons' performance. The second part of the thesis is an empirical demonstration of this Confucian approach. I conducted a study of the table game, Go, in which I treated human conduct as lived persons' performance with differential profundity, portrayed and displayed my own experiences of self-transformation in the area of Go, and invited my audiences to go through theirs.

Notes

1. For the basic rules of Go, please see the website of the British Go Association: http://www.britgo.org/intro/intro2
2. This can be called the problem of "intellectualism" in terms of Merleau-Ponty (1981) or the problem of "mentalism" in terms of Rubinstein (1986). Schütz's "We-relationship" points to an area prior to and beyond the realm of intellectualism or mentalism, but he did not develop this concept very much. Similarly, Mead's concepts of "organism in relation to its environment" in general and "human organisms in relation to social activity" in particular also point to the area prior to and beyond the realm of intellectualism or mentalism. However, Mead did not investigate it. Blumer's symbolic interactionism even turns back to strong intellectualism or mentalism.
3. Unlike Schütz or Blumer (together with Mead), who expressed ideas as systematic and coherent theory, Mencius expressed his thoughts as collected conversations without a systematic or coherent line of reasoning penetrating all of them. Thus, I cannot summarize his thoughts as I have summarized Schütz's and Blumer's. The alternative way I introduce Mencius's teachings of self-transformation (修身) is to reveal three connotations in the following conversation.
4. There are many editions of the ancient book of *Mencius*. I consulted one English edition (Lau 2003) and one Chinese–English edition (鄭訓佐, 趙甄陶, 張文庭, 周定之 1993) before I translated any citation into English.
5. It is very difficult to translate the term "qi" into English without serious distortion. Although some Sinologists, according to Tu (1985: 36–37), tried to render it as "matter-energy," "vital force," or "vital power," I do not think these translations are helpful. Nevertheless, I do think "traffic" as a metaphor may help readers better catch the idea of qi. If we see cities as the nodes of a global traffic network, then the historical processes of cities, their rise and fall, incarnate the convergence and divergence of the traffic flows of people, goods, money, energy, information, and so on. From this viewpoint, no individual city is isolated or independent.

References

Anderson, R. J., Hughes, J. A., & Sharrock, W. W. (1985). *The Sociology Game*. London: Longman.

Benton, T., & Craib, I. (2001). *Philosophy of Social Science: The Philosophical Foundations of Social Thought*. New York: Palgrave.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Ho Hwang, P. (1979). What Is Mencius' Theory of Human Nature? *Philosophy East and West, 29*(2), 201–209.
Hughes, J. A., & Sharrock, W. W. (1997). *The Philosophy of Social Research*. London: Longman.
Jullien, F. (2002). 道德奠基:孟子与启蒙哲人的对话. 北京: 北京大学出版社.
Lau, D. C. (2003). *Mencius*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
Lu, W. H. (2010). *Toward a Sociology Informed by Confucian Self-transformation—A Study of Go as the First Step*. PhD Thesis, The University of Manchester.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1981). *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York: Humanities Press.
Prus, R. (1996). *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Rubinstein, D. (1986). Wittgenstein and Social Science. In S. Shanker (Ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments (V.4)*. London: Croom Helm.
Schütz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Schütz, A. (1973a). Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action. In M. Natanson (Ed.), *Collected Papers I*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
Schütz, A. (1973b). Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences. In M. Natanson (Ed.), *Collected Papers I*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
Schütz, A. (1976). The Social World and the Theory of Social Action. In A. Brodersen (Ed.), *Collected Papers II*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
Steinmetz, G. (2004). Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and 'Small N's' in Sociology. *Sociological Theory, 22*(3), 371–400.
Tu, W. M. (1985). *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Tucker, M. E. (2004). Introduction. In W. M. Tu & M. E. Tucker (Eds.), *Confucian Spirituality II*. New York: Crossroad Publishing.
王邦雄, 岑溢成, 楊祖漢, 高柏園. (2006). 中國哲學史(上). 台北: 里仁書局.
王陽明. (1992a). 傳習錄上. 於吳光, 錢明, 董平, 姚延福 (eds.). 王陽明全集. 上海: 上海古籍出版社.
王陽明. (1992b). 傳習錄中. 於吳光, 錢明, 董平, 姚延福 (eds.). 王陽明全集. 上海: 上海古籍出版社.
石田芳夫. (1989). 實戰格言集. 台北: 世界文物出版社.
張亨. (1997). 思文之際論集—儒道思想的現代詮釋. 台北: 允晨文化出版社.
楊儒賓. (2004). 儒家身體觀. 臺北市: 中央研究院中國文哲研究所籌備處.
鄭訓佐, 趙甄陶, 張文庭, 周定之. (1993). *Mencius*. 濟南: 山東友誼出版社.

CHAPTER 9

Structure, Agency and Victimization: On the Ethics of Scientific Writing

Gudrun Dahl

Contemporary texts in sociology and anthropology often position themselves morally by stating 'These people are not victims, but agents.' The purpose of this chapter is to problematize the place of such normative tropes in science and to spell out some of the implications of the trope.

A few examples from women's studies can illustrate the general formula. Pelak (2005: 66) asserts that 'South African women footballers are not simply victims of sexist, racist, colonialist relations, but are active agents in negotiating structural inequalities and ideological constraints in the social institution of sport.' Povey (2003) writes under the headline 'Women in Afghanistan: passive victims of the borqa or active social participants?' An abstract by Alley et al. (1998) states that 'a few studies have challenged the stereotype of homeless women as passive victims and demonstrated that they are active in seeking solutions to their problems…'. Similar formulations abound also in the literature on other disprivileged social categories. I will refer to them as the ANV trope (Agents Not Victims). They occur also in official discourse; for example, in. Swedish policy documents relating to immigration or development aid. Former Minister of Foreign Aid Jan Carlsson thus stated about refugees: 'They are not victims but people who seek to govern their own lives.' In a study of

G. Dahl (✉)
Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_9

Swedish development non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Gunnarsson et al. (1999) found that such organizations emphasized, among other values governing their communication, that they did not want to show people 'as victims but as having power and capacity for initiatives'.

Echoes are also heard in public debate and everyday conversation. Drafting this article in summer 2005, I listened to a morning broadcast, in which words-on-the-way for that day were delivered. The listeners were told not to see themselves as victims but as responsible for their own life. The day after, a colleague remarked about Ghanaian market women: 'They are no damned victims, but capable people.' Some time later, three young Suryoyo girls were interviewed in Sweden's largest daily after serious riots in their home community.[1] They complained that they felt humiliated by the media: 'After Ronna, we are depicted as will-less victims. We are not,' they said.

The wish to write respectfully about our informants is not new in anthropology, but the value basis for respectful writing changes with time. Before the postmodern turn in anthropology brought agency to the fore, efforts were made by anthropologists to prove the rationality of apparently incomprehensible actions and beliefs (Sperber 1982). Rationality, an extremely multi-dimensional term, was the rod for measuring the value of others. Definitions of respectful co-humanness take departure in historically contingent images of what constitutes a worthy human being.

Moralizing arguments of the ANV type are also launched in debates about whether structure or agency should be emphasized in social science. How does a certain category of individuals use its scope for action to pursue particular instrumental or communicative goals? How do regularities at a supra-individual level—structures of resource endowment, legal rules, spatiality, cultural conventions—circumscribe, induce or enable action (Giddens 1979: 59–69; Smith 1999: 10–11)? One may argue about the analytical efficiency of emphasizing either of these types of questions and, obviously, the choice correlates with the political ideology of the researcher. In this chapter I am not concerned with these aspects, however, but with the moral basis of the ANV trope.

The trope represents a pre-theoretical moral commitment. Rather than to offer an elaboration in theoretical terms of the analytical gains to be made, the statement is part of the self-representation of the author vis-à-vis anonymous dialogical others. The trope justifies the messages of the text

in terms of an ethics of representation, as an attempt to redress stereotypes, prevalent in the mind of an unspecified public or implicit in theoretical approaches to which the author does not want to be aligned. While the trope is no longer an original challenge to mainstream thinking, it signals that the writer is critical and engaged.

A 'victim' is basically a person suffering for reasons unrelated to his/her own agency. The archetypical victim has not effectively caused or provoked her own predicament—neither intentionally nor unintentionally. Instead, the concept blames some other wilful perpetrator, or more general circumstances unaffected by the victim. In Gilligan's terms 'The "victim" is the diminished agent par excellence … Victims are, by definition, passive objects who have been acted upon by other forces, not active agents. They are defined by the mark that has been made on them rather than the mark that they have made on the wider world. In as far as they are victims, they are devoid of volition or intent' (2003: 29).

'Victim' in its core sense is a relational term referring to a particular misfortune. If we look at contrasting alternatives offered by different versions of the ANV trope, we find that the victim is also depicted as generally lacking power, inner force, responsibility, capacity for initiatives or agency. Victims are not participating in their own history, weak and passive.

Serious intellectual thought about victimhood is found in feminist sociology/anthropology and in the criminological sub-branch of victimology. How have these disciplines treated the issue?

Feminism and the Concept of Victims

Feminist theorists emphasize how women actively negotiate their own subject positions and the constraints put up by prevalent discourses, stressing the critical role of discourse in structuring social relations. American feminist writers in the early 1990s put emphasis on female victimhood (Flood 1999) to get recognition for battered women after a situation where violence towards women was considered a private matter. Activists in their support networks demanded that abused women should be given legal status as victims. Victim terminology made visible formerly hidden structures of inequality and oppression (Agevall 2001: 26–28). Later in the 1990s, critics such as Wolf (1993), Roiphe (1993) and Denfeld (1995) challenged 'victim feminism' with 'power feminism'. According to Wolf, the former idealizes women and demonizes men. Wolf asked for a feminism that claims equality simply because women are entitled to it (1993: xvii),

seeing women as human beings—sexual, individual, no better or worse than men.

Stringer (2001) perceptively summarizes this feminist debate about victimhood. Arguing that different debaters operate with different victim concepts, she notes that already the early anti-abuse activists who used the term worried that 'victimhood' might turn into a performative identity for individuals presenting themselves as victims of others. It is held that this stance is held to invite further victimization, 'victim' then connoting not just a person who is innocently hurt, but a person who considers this to be an essential part of her personality and social relations. 'Victim behaviour' combines unnecessary and inefficient complaint with passive yielding to abuse.

Feminists within as well as outside the activist movement solve the problem of such 'victim mentality' by encouraging victims to think of themselves as capable actors. Various strategies have been used to achieve this. An article on women's physical self-defence (De Welde 2003) claims to illustrate a process of 'reframing victimization, liberating the self, and enabling the body in a transformation of gender and self-narratives that affirm "femininity" while subverting its defining ideologies'. More common strategies have been discursive. Anti-abuse activists suggest that the term 'survivor' should be substituted for 'victim', generally and at the individual level, a switch representing emancipation from a destructive self-image of passivity, powerlessness, vulnerability, feelings of guilt, pain, confusion and shame. In contrast 'survivor' is associated with resourcefulness, courage, anger, and resistance, and is also seen as an earned title. (Agevall 2001 qu. Kelly et al. 1996: 91). Surviving is not supposed to rest on passive endurance, but on mobilized resistance. In Sweden, feminists and anti-abuse activists have adopted the translation '*överlevare*' or, as the National Organization against Sexual Abuse prefer, '*hjälte*', (Lindgren 2004: 29), 'hero', with even stronger connotations of autonomous preparedness to take to action.

As Stringer notes, the discursive approaches used by 'victim feminism' resemble Wolf's 'power feminism'. The goal of both branches of feminism is empowerment through an improved self-image. Both camps hold that an emphasis on the victim role strikes back at women. They see a need to recognize women as agents, and require that female writers and speakers neither posit themselves nor other women as passive, lest they reproduce an oppressive ideology. An explicit ethics of writing is thus present.

Victimology

Victimology as a branch of criminology aims to disentangle the empirical analysis of perpetrators, targets of crimes and their mutual interaction from socially constructed presuppositions about the agency, innocence and so on of the same categories. For this purpose, the discipline uses the concept of 'victim' only technically and with the explicit ambition to avoid moral judgements and issues of blame.

Since the 1980s possibilities for crime victims to gain support and indemnification have been furthered in several countries, emphasizing their need to get their status legally recognized. Such legal definitions relate to suffering from acts which have actually been criminalized in that particular historical context. Christie (1986) describes the characteristics that the target of a crime needs to successfully claim crime victim status apart from enough influence to back up the claim. They reflect the basic connotations of the concept. The crime victim should preferably be weak, involved in a respectable activity when hit or heading for a non-blameable location. The accused perpetrator must also fit the preconceptions: have the upper hand, be unknown and unrelated to the victim and generally describable in negative terms, (Lindgren et al. 2001). To be hit by a crime, you neither need to be innocent nor weak, but criminologists find that non-aggressive women, children and people who have suffered a long time more easily get recognition as victims (Lamb 1999: 115). The legal concepts do not exhaust all the potential everyday meanings of the concept, but the latter still influence who will in practice be counted as a victim.

Another focus of victimology has been the potential stigmatization when the victim succeeds in getting recognized, an ambivalent loss of ascribed agency that opens up both for protection and for oppression. Feminism and victimology agree in the observation that female victims to be recognized must act in ways that preserve gender norms (Agevall 2001: 75). Stigmatization may turn back charges of responsibility to the victim: not for what he/she did, but for what he/she did not do or for what he/she is. People in the victim's environment want to define the victim as radically different, to exclude that the latter's fate could happen to themselves (see Leymann 1986: 207; Lindgren 2004: 29–30). Or simply, othering is a way to escape the responsibility to offer support.

While victimology confronts the stereotype of the crime/victim with empirical evidence, feminist debates on victimhood do not challenge the concept of victim as such. Rather, they just question its applicability to women.

To Describe and Construe

The discursive turn in social science has directed attention towards how people are practically affected by socially constructed labels, in daily life or in social science. The textual obliteration of agency is sometimes treated as an obliteration in the absolute sense: people become passive when they are described as passive (e.g. Poluha 2004: 15). The model of understanding behind this equalization seems to have two basic strains. First, others may usurp the agency of those seen as passive, arguing that they act on behalf of people not capable of acting themselves. The understanding of people as lacking power, agency and responsibility is a pretext for withdrawing their rights. Secondly self-definitions affect people's own agency. Does the writer contribute to destroy the former?

The efficiency of discursive power in constructing the self of the subordinated person as powerless may overestimate both the repressive and the revolutionary power of the ideas of an elite. It exemplifies the type of stance it criticizes: the subordinated are seen as passively accepting the definitions produced by those who have discursive power.

In the vivid debate on victimhood in American feminist writings, the idea of the 'victim' as a negative self-image, an identity, is very prominent. The ANV trope similarly suggests that victimhood is an essentialized aspect of somebody's identity. To be described or treated as a victim would be seen as involving a risk of permanently looking at yourself as a victim, rejecting responsibility for your situation and incurring blame on others. The notion of such 'victim mentality' is not entirely separate from another abhorrence of contemporary neo-liberal discourse: aid dependency. It is rarely problematized under which circumstances a person draws on actual situational experiences of victimhood or other people's perceptions to form such a self-image. The discourse refers rather to moral and philosophical considerations than to a safe empirical grounding.

The passivity implied by the core meaning of the concept 'victim' refers to the direct causality of the damage the victim suffers. The concept applies if the damaging act is not a well-justified revenge and if the victim is innocent of his own misfortune. The limits of this passivity are not clear cut, neither in the various realities of victimization, nor in the stereotyping of victimhood. A victim may make resistance (Agevall 2001: 27), yet end up victimized. Forms of passivity may be actively chosen in order to minimize damage. Passivity itself may be a provocation. The victim may stand out as passive only compared to the active perpetrator. The passivity may only

relate to the misfortune itself—as, for example, when a person is interrupted in her active work by the bullet of a sniper. The stereotype extends the dimension of passivity as if it was a general trait of the victim not only in the very situation of the victimization but also in subsequent moments, and not only in relation to causation of injury but also for example in relation to resistance. The trope suggests that 'victimhood' and 'agency' are essential aspects by which persons can be characterized, rather than situational and relationally defined. A description of how somebody has undeservingly been subjected to maltreatment or misfortune is reread as a signalizing general and blameable lack of agency.

To understand the full implication of the ANV trope, however, we need to consider the semiotics of the word agency.

The Concept of Agency

'Agency' as an important sociological concept is said to have been introduced by E.P. Thompson (1963). Discontented with hearing that working-class consciousness directly emerge from the logics of capitalism, Thompson argued for the importance of human agency and reflection. Since then, the concept of agency has become prominent in social science generally. As with many such terms, popularity engenders polysemy. The Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED 1989) offers a definition: 'The faculty of an agent or of acting'. Clarke (2003) combines this with what the dictionary says about 'faculty' and concludes 'Agency, in other words, may be defined as the capacity (in persons and things) through which something is created or done'. This quote reflects the term's basic ambiguity: it refers both to the basically human *ability and will to act freely* and to *effectively having an impact* on the world (cf. Smith 1999: 101).

Some authors such as Giddens (1979, 1993) build both these elements into their definition. Agency for Giddens relates to the capacity to make appropriate choices of action within a particular spatio-temporal and culturally defined context, in a way always transformative of the world. He relates agency to rationality, embodied human dispositions and knowledge about the structural environment. The potential of having an impact is implied and made irrelevant in relation to moral evaluation. Agency is a facility used as soon as there is a choice.

In the literature theorizing on agency, more narrow definitions are often used than those suggested by Giddens. Some researchers emphasize

the imprint made by the action without implying intentions (see e.g. Asad in Mahmood 1996; Ramphele 1997: 115). Notable are those representing actor-network theory, where the term is applied also to non-reflecting 'agents' such as animals or objects (e.g. Callon 1986). Others emphasize the action itself (Anderson 1980: 19) and yet others stress the propensity to undertake conscious choices and goal-directed action (Halkier 2004: 27). There is no consensus on 'agency' and little reason to expect the term to be clear when used in relation to the ANV trope. Normative uses of the trope do not require that the author specifies his/her definition of 'agency' (or 'actor').

An analytical distinction between agency as efficient influence and agency as individual willingness to act is not always possible when agency is wielded on behalf of others, often in collective form. The original intentions of individual actors may have been alienated or pass through links of representation or have been abstracted and objectified in texts (cf. Asad in Mahmood 1996). 'Agency' definitions either explicitly based on or pre-assuming intentionality are nevertheless the most common ones within social science. They are the ones most readily infused with issues of accountability and responsibility, which fall out differently, depending on whether we talk about the propensity to act or the efficiency of action.

Ethics and morality can variously be based on intentions or 'attributable consequences' (Asad in Mahmood 1996). Both are expressed in terms of causation, responsibility and accountability. Like 'victimhood' and 'agency', these three terms are not used only in relation to specific acts, but as essentializing traits, assumedly characterizing individuals or categories of people. That is, a person may not only be responsible for collecting garbage or responsible for the broken cup, but also a responsible person.

Attributions and the Self

Liberal individualism puts on a person the charge to act, to be accountable for what has been done and have foresight of what to do. Agency, responsibility and accountability all primarily refer to the relation between a subject and a particular, historically or situationally contingent set of actions. The ANV trope brings us away from seeing them as processual and situational to see them as personal, moral traits, a mistake close to the classic 'fundamental error of attribution' noted by

social psychologists in the Heider tradition. These researchers argued that people tend to explain the behaviour of other people as expressions of their character, while they see their own behaviour as a reaction to constraints.

What is it then to write about somebody as an agent? 'Attribution theory' offers a clue. Basically, to write from the actor's own point of view, is to write about the situation of action as it is experienced by the actor in the moment of choice of action—thrown into the world and the stream of time in the way the individual always is, according to Heidegger (1927). (Lamentably, accounts given afterwards are often the closest approximation that we can get to such an actor's meaning.) To understand oneself as an actor is more seldom a matter of seeing action in terms of 'what person I am' but relates to solving a task in a particular situation of constraints and opportunities (Heider 1958; Jones et al. 1972; Weiner 1986). Action-oriented research should thus emphasize how situational constraints are perceived rather than how action expresses identity.

A different elaboration from attribution theory has been made by those who argue that to improve behaviour, one needs to effect a cognitive change from 'external attributions' to 'internal attributions'. Alleged cultural differences in interpreting causation are part of a widely distributed discourse of psycho-cultural differences, which relate to a Western hailing of inner control as a tool for progress, a logic that resonates with Protestantism (see Mahler et al. 1981; Furnham and Procter 1989; Carmona 1998). People discussing internal and external attributions in relation to female sexual victimization, however, see internal attributions as obstacles to emancipation rather than the key to change. (Thomas and Kitzinger 1997: 10; Flood 1999). Stringer (op.cit.), discussing the feminist concepts of 'victims' and 'survivors', notes the affinity between 'self-blame' (a destructive retrospective stance) and 'taking personal responsibility for one's situation' (a liberating, future-oriented reclaim of agency). Worried by the similarity of the two notions in terms of putting all the responsibility on the individual, Stringer claims that they differ in 'that a "survivor" is cognisant of her capacity for active resistance, and scripts her future in accord with this, whereas a "victim" is not cognisant of her capacities and so scripts a passive future'. Still, her emphasis is on inner constraints and capacities, not on how the victim could be empowered by an increased understanding of the nature of external constraints or factors of oppression.

The Gains of Victimhood

An entirely different strand of criticism against 'victim discourse' emanates from the standpoint that victimhood is nowadays increasingly exploited for personal and political reasons. If this is a real trend and not just a convenient social construction, it suggests that victimhood is not always humiliating. The eagerness with which victim status is taken up as a collective claim shows that the positive gains to make are often judged as bigger than the potential losses.

At the political level, those who win victim status may achieve a relocation of blame and gain moral authority and indemnification. To ask for victim status is not necessarily an abdication from agency, but can itself be a form of rewarding agency. Gilligan (2003: 32) offers a rather complicated argument about victimhood in Northern Ireland, where very different political actors claim to represent victims, appropriating the moral authority of the latter: 'The politics of victimhood suggest a vigorous contestation between political adversaries, not a diminished agency. On closer inspection however, the use of victimhood for political ends tends to support the argument that a diminished human agency underlies the peace process…' Gilligan's proposition is that victimhood has resonance with the Irish population, based on a widespread loss of effective agency among the constituents.

Many inflamed debates over victim status relate to the questioning of other people's rights to the presumed gains. The claims of victim status in relation to the Second World War are still contested. Apart from the Jewish and Roma tragedy, various side stories attempt to evoke sympathy for other categories: Baltic leaders not wanting to be seen as accomplices to German invaders in the persecution of Jews but as suffering themselves from the occupation, German civilians claiming that they innocently suffered from the bomb-raids of the Allied forces and so on. (Niven 2006; Ther 2006) In other cases, historical claims to victim status are criticized for being used as a generalized excuse for contemporary action, as in the case of Israel.

Some authors, such as Kleinman, suggest that today's world sees an increasing trend to claim victim status (1997: 188–187). Kleinman emphasizes that victimhood sells well as a medialized commodity. Flood (1999) argues for 'a general cultural shift, in which injustices and harms done to people increasingly are individualised and psychologised, especially through the language of therapy'.

In the French journal *Le Monde*, a debate was triggered in 2004 when a young woman falsely claimed that she had been sexually harassed by racists. Like the attempts to escape responsibility for the Holocaust, this case illustrates how victimhood claims may also imply morally doubtable opportunities. French public intellectuals felt summoned to comment on contemporary trends to heroize victims in an all too insecure world and to always trace somebody to hold accountable. They linked these tendencies to the French institutionalization of protection for crime victims since the mid-1980s, and to the emergence of collective movements to represent the victims of environmental and health scandals.

Structural Violence and Victimization

Issues of uneven distribution of constraints and opportunities actualize another context in which the ANV trope is mobilized, apart from that of individual suffering and misfortune. In order to distinguish this context from the general discipline of victimology, Mc Leer (1998: 45) has coined the expression 'radical victimology' for analyses that use the language of victimization in relation to structural, institutionalized and less personalized oppression or domination. Following Galtung (1969), such analyses also occur under the heading of 'structural violence'. The concept 'structural victims' suggests a non-intentional, diffuse power or a system constraining the opportunities of the sufferer.

After the Tsunami of 2005, images were spread in the media of the global structures of rifts between continental shields. Unknown to many potential victims, these provide good metaphors for society's structures of vulnerability: regularities in international conventions and financial flows, national legal systems, the distribution of capital and means of production, cultural institutions, infrastructure and material topography. Smith (1999) talks about such structures as 'concrete abstractions'—abstract or invisible in their totality for people whose range of action they influence. Changes at the structural level may transform the individual's scope of action, without being open for inspection or interference, a point raised by Asad in his criticism of agency-oriented social science (see Mahmood 1996). The structural level redistributes agency-as-efficient-influence, but does not necessarily affect the basic propensity to make reflected choices of action.

Analyses of structural violence and inequality have been criticized for not ascribing enough autonomous agency to subordinate classes. Smith (op. cit: 89) quotes Roseberry (1993: 336) as stating that earlier schol-

ars saw peasants as reactors to oppression rather than as protagonists and initiators, with their own forceful agency. In the discourse of 'not-victims-but-capable-agents', to describe injustices in structural terms puts the agency of victims off the agenda, representing them as passive people who neither want to, nor are able to do anything about their situation.

Criticism of 'victim discourse' often emphasizes the tendency to homogenize inherent in structural analysis, said not to recognize the heterogeneity of lives and personal characteristics, strategies or modes of suffering (See e.g. Harrison 1995: 237 passim, Kleinman 1997: 187 passim).[2] By suggesting enduring constraints on a super individual level, one is held to essentialize the characteristics of the 'victims', giving them all the associated connotations of passivity. Authors such as Gardner and Lewis (1996: 18) argue that Marxist dependency theory, for example, is flawed by its 'inability to deal with empirical variation'. Pottier (1999), who holds that grand narratives of social science fail to describe the variations of real life, where people are sometimes victims, sometimes winners (1999: 132 ff), identifies Shiva (1992), van der Ploeg (1990) and Meillassoux (1981) as part of a continued tradition: 'All three opt for a broad "passive victims" representation, thus denying the victims their social differentiation and human agency … Are farmers totally powerless in the face of the homogenizing activities of such trans-national bodies? Do they really engage with these global forces in a uniformly submissive manner? … Analyses which put all the emphasis on structural constraints at the cost of highlighting how farmers strategize to make the most of new opportunities have merit, but they are one-sided. Despite the formidable hurdles they encounter, small-scale farmers are not passive pawns at the mercy of globalizing forces.'

Structural models of differences in power and agency resonate with other dichotomies where the subordinated status is associated with passivity. Whatever is stated about a category of people traps us in the quagmires of essentialism. The ANV trope itself is subject to the same risk. Linked to emancipation politics, it is usually phrased in terms of some homogenized social category, such as 'women', 'slaves', 'peasants' or 'refugees'. To essentialize a social category not as victims but as agents would be no ethical problem unless for the implication that there are counter-categories that do not live up to this qualification. One may also ask whether it is necessarily true that to generalize about constraints makes the personal qualities of the agents acting within them less visible:

instead it enables the researcher to see the variation between agents in terms of the choices they make, rather than in terms of their relative degrees of inherent agency.

One issue that seems to trouble some analysts is how far structural victimization can be used as an apology for individual behaviour. This is raised by Gilligan (2003: 32) in relation to the Northern Irish Families Acting for Innocent Relatives (FAIR): 'The argument is that terrorists are victims of circumstance, and have experienced suffering in their own way. The implication is that these people are not accountable for their actions, the fact is they chose to go out and murder, they chose to torture and maim. Their actions are not excusable on the grounds that they are "victims" too.' Bourgois (1995: 53, 119) addresses a similar problem: 'From the safety of a desk or a reading chair, the Puerto Rican population's history of economic dislocation, political domination, cultural oppression and large-scale migration easily accounts for why street culture in el Barrio might be so brutally self-destructive…' Yet, he states, the violent behaviour of his informants could not be excused by any amount of 'historical apology' and 'structural victimization'; nor would they themselves find themselves exempted from individual accountability. They have not 'passively accepted their structural victimization' but in searching to handle their marginalization have 'become the actual agents administering their own destruction and their community's suffering' (p. 143). In making these distance-taking declarations, Bourgois actualizes two other aspects of victim discourse. To be a victim may be a claim not only to be innocent in the instance of victimization but also to be held irresponsible for later acts seen as done in reaction to victimization. As in the case of crime victims, structural victimhood raises false expectations of general innocence; but suffering people are not immune from contributing to their own suffering (p. 354, fn. 19), neither to adding to the suffering of others, a point also made by Kleinman (1997: 187).

Narratives of structural victimization present other types of relation between blame and responsibility than stories of individual victimization by identifiable perpetrators. The strength of classical identity and class politics is their capacity to deflect the passivizing effects inherent in self-blame. They encourage to action by translating personal experience to something more general, a fact ironically disregarded by those who suggest that shared stories of victimization tend to subvert agency.

The Cultural Basis of the Trope?

To what extent is the morality on which the ANV trope is based universal or culturally and historical contingent? The fact that it is rarely made explicit suggests a taken-for-grantedness.

I have not found any systematic cross-cultural comparison of how people evaluate victims of misfortune, or even if the term is universally translatable. The problem of blaming and devaluating victims is often presented as a general human one, related to beliefs in a just world, the need to minimize cognitive dissonance and so on. Sunstein (1997/1991: 164) discusses how such factors influence how victims are perceived. The victim can be criticized for exaggerated or false claims, more passivity than the situation demands, signals of acquiescence or even invitations to abuse. Sunstein mentions how people unjustifiably perceive misfortunes as having been more predictable than they in fact were, blaming the victims for a lack of foresight.

Lacking substantial evidence on the comparative semantics of victimhood and lack of agency, it is still relevant to note the links between the ANV trope and culturally contingent strands of contemporary thinking in e.g. pop psychology, therapy and commercialized management ideology. For example, the ideology of 'positive thinking' launched by Peale (1952) has had a lasting impact on the commodified messages in managerial consultancy and education. It vividly expresses the conflation of will and effectiveness that the term 'agency' entails. Asad (in Mahmood 1996) and Rose (1999: 268) see the contemporary obsession with agency as closely linked to neo-liberalism and an over-belief in the efficiency of a strong will. In a criticism of how a similar agency-focussed discourse has been used in slavery scholarship where it marginalizes other versions of human emancipation, Johnson (2003) too links the emphasis on agency as defining of 'humanity' with liberal individualism.

Conclusion

The moral messages implied by the 'not victims but agents' trope are not clearer than its basic terms. First, there is the morality of representation. Most simply, the trope tells us not to essentialize passivity but to write about our study objects as agents. We may read 'agents' either as intentional agents, or as people who have efficiently had an impact. The rejected term 'victims' is equally ambiguous. Do we talk about people hampered

by constraints, struck by accidents or being targets of malevolent action, or about people passivized by 'victim mentality'? The trope conveys the wish to avoid an expected sense of humiliation for the object of description and adding to a passivizing self-image that might reinforce reality.

Yet, while the ambitions that govern the use of the ANV trope are well intended, the trope stands for a less visible layer of questionable morality. It tells us that the value of the described people *depends* upon them being prepared to act, or on acting with an impact. The ANV trope is a conventionalized rhetorical move that reiterates and reproduces one particular moral stance, but without supportive discussion as if a consensus on the issue is self-evident. In denying that category X are 'victims', the trope suggests that there may be other people (Y, Z) who do not live up to the standards, and that being passive or victim is contemptible, regardless of causes.

Are there really people who merit the description 'victims'? Who are they, and are *any* people in need of protection contemptible? A more human approach is to see preparedness to act appropriately out of one's perceived situation as an (in principle) universal human trait, while the opportunities to achieve an impact are unequally distributed. Even if by repeating the trope one would be able to convince the audience that a particular group X is in fact prepared to act, and/or does have an impact, the very repetition implies a reinforcement of norms that question the universality of a human will to act.

This aspect of the usage of the trope exemplifies the unintended consequences of action (Giddens 1979: 7 and 69 ff). A conscious rhetorical move, intended to discursively emancipate group X, thus at the same time reproduces its own silent premises (cf. Fairclough 1989: 41). Instead of undermining the interpretation of victimhood as shameful, the ANV trope reinforces it (cf. Kelly et al. 1996: 92). It celebrates the unspecified category of action. 'Agency' becomes an unmarked category validated as good per se, disregarding whether it contributes to a positive change in conditions, maintains status quo or incurs damage and suffering to others. In contrast it is implied that constraints necessarily reflect badly on the character of the constrained, and that weakness in itself is contemptible. The users of the trope contribute to undermining collective engagement and solidarity by blaming the victims.

It is difficult for social science to find linguistic expressions that do not imply extra-scientific assumptions and to handle issues of power, agency and moral accountability. We must be able to talk about the impact of

structural patterns on the scope of people's action without being seen as questioning their preparedness to act within the framework of possibilities. We must make clear distinctions between agency in the sense of efficient impact and in the sense of willingness to act, not to reread the effects of constraints as individual shortcomings of character. Rather than objecting to those who describe structural constraints, we need scepticism against all arguments that withdraw constraints from our focus of attention, and against the myths of science and policy discourse that question the wish by people to be active for and by themselves.

Notes

1. (DN: 21 Sept. 2005).
2. In line with much post-structuralist writing on the complexities of the self, Kelly et al. (1996: 91–94) direct a similar criticism against the dichotomy of victim versus survivor as homogenizing the subject itself too much. The two opposites reflect subject positions and emotional states that the individual can alternate between or maintain parallel to each other (cf.Springer fn 19).

References

Agevall, C. (2001). Konstruktionen av offer i den rättsliga argumentationen om våldtäkt. En problematisering av hur föreställningar om kön och sexualitet inverkar på förståelsen av våldtäkt. In *Brottsoffer i fokus. De vinnande bidragen i Brottsoffermyndighetens uppsatstävling*. Stockholm: Brottsoffermyndigheten.

Alley, N., et al. (1998). Health Promotion Lifestyles of Women Experiencing Crises. *Journal of Community Health Nursing, 15*, 2.

Anderson, P. (1980). *Arguments Within English Marxism*. London: Verso.

Bourgois, P. (1995). *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Callon, M. (1986). Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. In J. Law (Ed.), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge* (pp. 196–233). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Carmona, L. (1998). Cultural Influence on Just World Beliefs. Retrieved from http://www.units.muohio.edu/psybersite/justworld/culture.shtml

Christie, N. (1986). The Ideal Victim. In E. A. Fattah (Ed.), *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy* (pp. 17–30). London: The Macmillan Press.

Clarke, L. (2003). How Ought We to Understand the Concept of 'Rhetorical Agency': A Statement on the Potential of Logos Within Speakers, Writers, and Audience. Retrieved from http://www.comm.umn.edu/ARS/Agency/clarke,%20agency.htm

De Welde, K. (2003). Getting Physical: Subverting Gender Through Self-Defense. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 323*, 247–278.

Denfeld, R. (1995). *The New Victorians: A Young Woman's Challenge to the Old Feminist Order*. New York: Warner Books and Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.

Flood, M. (1999). *Victim Feminism and Power Feminism*. Guest lecture to the course 'Introducing Women's Studies: The Public Life of Feminism, Department of Women's Studies, Australian National University. Retrieved from http://www.europrofem.org/contri/contr_en.htm

Furnham, A., & Procter, E. (1989). Belief in a Just World: Review and Critique of the Individual Difference Literature. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 28*, 365–384.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research, 63*, 167–191.

Gardner, K., & Lewis, D. (1996). *Anthropology, Development and the Post-Modern Challenge*. London: Pluto Press.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London: Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1993). *New Rules of Sociological Method*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gilligan, C. (2003). Constant Crisis/Permanent Process: Diminished Agency and Weak Structures in the Northern Ireland Peace Process. *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics, 3*(1), 22–37.

Gunnarsson, S., Hatt, K., & Åberg, E. (1999). *Starka och handlingskraftiga människor? En studie om den u-landsbild några organisationer i biståndssektorn förmedlar*. Diploma Paper, GI/IHR, Stockholm University.

Halkier, B. (2004). Handling Food-Related Risks: Political Agency and Governmentality. In M. Lien & B. Nerlich (Eds.), *The Politics of Food*. Oxford: Berg.

Harrison, F. W. (1995). Writing Against the Grain: Cultural Politics of Difference in the World of Alice Walker. In R. Behar & D. Gordon (Eds.), *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California.

Heidegger, M. (1927). *Sein und Zeit* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans. 1978 as *Being and Time*). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Heider, F. (1958). *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York: Wiley.

Johnson, W. (2003). On Agency. *Journal of Social History, 371*, 113–124.

Jones, E. E., Kannouse, D. E., Kelley, H. H., Nisbett, R. E., Valins, S., & Weiner, B. (Eds.). (1972). *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behavior*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.

Kelly, L., Burton, S., & Regan, L. (1996). Beyond Victim or Survivor: Sexual Violence, Identity and Feminist Theory and Practice. In L. Adkins & V. Merchant (Eds.), *Sexualising the Social: Power and the Organisation of Sexuality*. London: Macmillan Press.

Kleinman, A. (1997). *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Lamb, S. (1999). Introduction. In S. Lamb (Ed.), *New Versions of Victims: Feminists Struggle with the Concept*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
Leymann, H. (1986). *Vuxenmobbing. Om psykiskt våld i arbetslivet*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
Lindgren, M. (2004). *Brottsoffer i rättsprocessen: om ideala brottsoffer och goda myndigheter*. PhD Thesis, Stockholm University.
Lindgren, M., Pettersson, K.-Å., & Hägglund, B. (2001). *Brottsoffer. Från teori till praktik*. Stockholm: Jure.
Mahler, I., Greenberg, L., & Hayashi, H. (1981). A Comparative Study of Rules of Justice: Japanese Versus American. *Psychologia, 24*, 1–8.
Mahmood, S. (1996). Interview with Talal Asad in Mahmood 1996: Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Tradition. *SEHR, 5*, 1. Retrieved from http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/Asad in Mahmood 1996.html
Mc Leer, A. (1998). Saving the Victim: Recuperating the Language of the Victim and Reassessing Global Feminism. *Hypatia, 13*(1), 42.
Meillassoux, C. (1981). *Maidens, Meal and Money*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Niven, B. (Ed.). (2006). *Germans as Victims. Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
OED Oxford English Dictionary Online. (1989). 'agency, n'. In J. A. Simpson & E. S. C. Weiner (Eds.), *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press. OED Online. Oxford University Press. Retrieved April 29, 2003, from http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00004308; and 'faculty, n.' Oxford English Dictionary Online. Retrieved April 29, 2003, from http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00081572
Peale, N. V. (1952). *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Ballantine Books.
Pelak, C. F. (2005). Negotiating Gender/Race/Class Constraints in the New South Africa. A Case of Women's Soccer. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 401*, 53–70.
Poluha, E. (2004). *The Power of Continuity—Ethiopia Through the Eyes of its Children*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
Pottier, J. (1999). *Anthropology of Food: The Social Dynamics of Food Security*. Malden, MA/Cambridge: Blackwell/Polity Press.
Povey, E. R. (2003). Women in Afghanistan: Passive Victims of the Borga or Active Social Participants? *Development in Practice, 13*(2 & 3), 266–277. Oxford: Oxfam.
Ramphele, M. (1997). Political Widowhood in South Africa: The Embodiment of Ambiguity. In A. Kleinman, V. Das, & M. Lock (Eds.), *Social Suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Roiphe, K. (1993). *The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Roseberry, W. (1993). Beyond the Agrarian Question in Latin America. In F. Cooper, A. Isaacman, F. Mallon, W. Roseberry, & S. Stern (Eds.), *Confronting Historical Paradigms*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press.
Shiva, V. (1992). The Seed and the Earth: Biotechnology and the Colonisation of Regeneration. *Development Dialogue, 12*, 151–168.
Smith, G. (1999). *Confronting the Present. Towards a Politically Engaged Anthropology*. Oxford: Berg.
Sperber, D. (1982). Apparently Irrational Beliefs. In M. Hollis & S. Lukes (Eds.), *Rationality and Relativism* (pp. 149–180). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Stringer, R. (2001). Blaming Me, Blaming You: Victim Identity in Recent Feminism. *Outskirts: Feminisms Along the Edge* 8. Special issue ed. Chilla Bulbeck. Online Journal. Retrieved from http://www.chloe.uwa.edu.au/outskirts/contents.html
Sunstein, C. R. (1997/1991). Preferences and Politics. In R. E. Gooding & P. Pettit (eds.), Contemporary Political Philosophy. An Anthology. Oxford: Blackwell. Originally published in *Philosophy and Public Affairs, 20*, 3–34.
Ther, P. (2006). *The Burden of History and the Trap of Memory*. Retrieved from http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-08-21-ther-en.html
Thomas, A. M., & Kitzinger, C. (1997). Sexual Harassment: Reviewing the Field. In A. M. Thomas & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Sexual Harassment: Contemporary Feminist Perspectives*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press.
Thompson, E. P. (1963). *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Gollancz.
van der Ploeg, J. D. (1990). *Labor, Markets and Agricultural Production*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Weiner, B. (1986). *An Attributional Theory of Motivation and Emotion*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
Wolf, N. (1993). *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How it will Change the Twenty-First Century*. London: Chatto and Windus.

CHAPTER 10

With and Beyond Plurality of Standpoints: Sociology and the *Sadhana* of Multi-Valued Logic and Living

Ananta Kumar Giri

Introduction and Invitation

In his essay "Sociology and Ideology" André Béteille (2009) discusses a range of issues regarding the relationship between sociology and ideology, such as the need for sociology to maintain a focus on the empirical and distance itself from a zealous commitment to ideology. Towards the end of his essay, Béteille presents the challenge of pluralism, briefly pointing towards what he calls "plurality of standpoints." Béteille has consistently been a champion of a plural approach in the study of society,[1] but his discussion of plural standpoints in this essay raises further questions which call for further collaborative search and reflection. For example, what is the nature of standpoint in this plurality of standpoints—is it partial or absolute? Do these different standpoints communicate amongst themselves? Is it a responsibility for sociology to understand and contribute to communication among plural standpoints?[2] In this chapter, I wish to think together with Béteille about these questions and discuss further the challenge of pluralization that emanates from Béteille's reference to a plurality of standpoints in his essay. I do not make an exhaustive discussion of all

A.K. Giri (✉)
Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_10

the issues raised by Béteille but mainly focus on the theme of pluralism and plurality of standpoints, and discuss how ideology and theology also embody plural streams. I then briefly touch upon the issue of empirical and normative aspects of social reality that Béteille raises, and argue how sociology needs to go beyond the dualism of the empirical and normative to understand the normative strivings and struggles at work in the very heart of social reality itself.

Sociology and Plurality of Standpoints

For Béteille, an ideological approach to reality tends to present an absolutist picture, while sociology and social anthropology present us plural standpoints:

> […] there is no one unique or privileged standpoint in the study of society and culture. Even within the same society there generally is a plurality of standpoints, varying with religion, class, gender or moral and intellectual predilection, and besides different outsiders may view the same society from different standpoints. Sociology and social anthropology cannot move forward unless the plurality of standpoints is accepted as a fundamental condition for the systematic and comparative study of society and culture. But it is one thing to acknowledge the value of, say, studying marriage from the standpoint of a woman, or discrimination from that of a *dalit*, and quite another to have the standpoint itself defined by a particular agenda. (2009: 210)

Sociology and anthropology present us a plurality of standpoints of actors and institutions. But what is the nature of these standpoints? Are they partial or absolute? Building upon Béteille and also Mannheim,[3] the pioneer of sociology of knowledge, we can realize that each of these standpoints is partial, though they may claim absolutism on their own behalf.[4] But realizing the partial nature of one's standpoint and realizing that one's standpoint is interpenetrated or needs to be interpenetrated by others' standpoints calls for further work on self-transformation—transformation of one's one-dimensional epistemology and politics—mutual communication and institutional nurturance, where institutions of society facilitate such realization of one's partiality and communication via partial standpoints through institutionally facilitated spaces and processes. This calls for understanding the way in which a plurality of standpoints becomes part of the multi-dimensional processes of pluralization. This is a further

challenge for sociology. Here it is not enough to confine sociology to the empirical study of society, and not to accept the normative challenge of how sociological research can contribute to creating a field of knowledge, reflections, social relations and institutional space, where a plurality of standpoints can go beyond its initial closures—self-justification and absolutist claim—so that these standpoints can communicate with each other.

Béteille does not want one's standpoint in the study of society defined by a particular political agenda. He also does not want the study of religion to be confined only to the followers of a particular religion. As Béteille writes: "The sociologist's obligation to be even-handed and value neutral in the study of religion in a country like India where different religions with different world views and ideologies co-exist and are allowed and encouraged to grow and flourish. The comparative study of religion becomes difficult where study of religious beliefs and practices become divided among sociologists according to their religious identities so that Hinduism is studied only by Hindus, Islam only by Muslims, and Christianity only by Christians" (2009: 206). But the sad reality is that we find very few sociologists and anthropologists in India who study a religion other than the one to which they are born.[5] In order to overcome such binding and bondage as well as the problem of one's standpoint in the study of society being defined by a political agenda, as Béteille challenges us, we need to cultivate a process of pluralization where as students of society as well as the living embodiment of it we learn of the partial nature of our standpoints, accept the responsibility of going beyond these, and open ourselves to other standpoints and ways of seeing, being and living. In this way a standpoint does not remain just an "inheritance" but a project,[6] and an achievement,[7] sometimes a joint project and joint achievement, in the life of self, culture and society. Pluralizing our plural standpoints and making them open to mutual interpenetration constitutes a challenge for a creative joint project.[8]

Such a challenge creatively confronts us in contemporary ways of knowing and articulating epistemological standpoints such as feminist standpoint epistemology. In this example we are challenged to see and understand the world through "the eyes and experiences of oppressed women" and "apply vision and knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and social change" (Brooks 2006: 55). But feminist standpoint epistemology is faced with all the questions relating to standpoints raised above, including the need for going beyond one's standpoint. In this context, feminist standpoint epistemologists are themselves realizing that

there is not one standpoint for women in general and there is the need for dialogue across their different standpoints. As Brooks writes: "Many feminist scholars emphasize the need for open dialogue between women and different perspectives […]" (ibid.: 74). Sympathetic yet self-critical feminist epistemologists themselves are realizing that: "The very term 'standpoint' evokes an image of a position where one stands and views the other from a particular 'perspective.' Even though this image has been fruitful in feminist epistemology, it is time to acknowledge that it creates more problems than it solves. One problem is that it imports a fundamentalist theory of epistemic justification into feminist epistemology" (Rolin 2006: 134). In place of a fundamentalist theory of epistemic justification and what Sandra Harding, the pioneer of feminist standpoint epistemology, calls a "maximally objective standpoint," Kristen Rolin presents us with a "contextualist theory of epistemic justification" where in a particular context different standpoints including standpoints of different women interact with each other, and through this mutual interaction and dialogue justify each other. This leads to a socially grounded perspective which, it is important to note, "is not simply a view from a social position" (ibid.: 135; also see Harding 2004). "It is a matter of doing research with certain moral and social values" (ibid.). In line with our above discussions such values embody efforts to go beyond one's absolutist social positions, be open to one other and be part of the multi-dimensional processes of pluralization.

From Plurality of Standpoints to Pluralization

Pluralism is a much talked about ideal today, but we need to understand the distinction between pluralism and pluralization. A pluralist discourse can often be imprisoned within a logic of status quo without transforming the very condition such as nation-state and modernist epistemology which is prone to propound and assert a singular view of self, culture, method, disciplinarity, citizenship and the world (cf. Connolly 1995; Dallmayr 2010).[9] Most of the time we approach pluralism through the language of the noun, which is a language of stasis. Such a condition of stasis is amenable to looking at our mode of being in a condition of plurality as if we are standing still. In this context pluralization challenges us to realize plural modes of being, intersubjectivity, culture and society in dynamic ways, as verbs.[10] But as verbs they are not only activistic but also meditative. We need to transform the existing discourse and practice of pluralism into meditative verbs of pluralization.

Béteille uses the language of standpoint to point to conditions of plurality. Apart from this being a language of noun, this is also primarily the language of an observer,[11] which has its inherent limitations if it is not transformationally supplemented with the lived experiences of society actors. Participants in a condition of plurality live a life of plurality and do not only have standpoints about it. An observer's being in a condition of plurality is not the same as that of a participant. For example, participants in life-worlds of both society as well as an ideological field learn as well as fail to learn how to exist and co-exist, going beyond formal absolutist claims.

Standing is one mode of self-presentation and interaction with others, but in our spectrum of self-presentation there are other modes as well, such as sitting and walking. When we sit together and communicate and walk together it may lead to different possibilities of pluralization. While people from plural backgrounds of society, culture, gender, caste and ideology sit together it creates new realities and possibilities of going beyond their absolute claims and closures and creating spaces and processes of communication. Thus creative spaces for sitting together with and for people from different backgrounds has been one of the practices of human society—from tribal villages in the remote past as well as the present to varieties of dialogue spaces in the modern and postmodern world.[12] Similarly, when people from diverse backgrounds walk together it creates new conditions of pluralization, including co-walking meditation where they ruminate "when walking" (Thoreau 1975: 596).[13] Let us look at the significance of epochal marches such as Gandhi's Salt March in 1930 and the walk across riot-hit Noakali in 1947 which contributed to calming down communal fire and bring about peace,[14] Martin Luther King Jr's famous Washington March for Freedom in 1963 and marches organized by the women's movements. On the march in Washington walkers realized that they were not only blacks and whites, as Martin Luther King addressed these walkers of "creative suffering": "We cannot walk alone." In his epochal "I have a dream" speech King also hoped for a day when people "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Similarly, when a man takes part in the marches organized by the women's movements it creates a moving condition to realize that one is not just a man. In these marches participants get an opportunity to realize that they do not have just one standpoint; their standpoint is not an inheritance but a project, a joint project. In order to realize pluralization we need to go beyond the existential fact of the plurality of stand-

points and explore how in the fabric of daily life and in struggles for co-realization, such as varieties of struggles and mobilizations for dignity and dialogues, participants go beyond the existing logic of closure and pluralize their lives and modes of relationships.

Pluralization and the *Sadhana* of Multi-Valued Logic and Living

Sociology for Béteille presents a plurality of standpoints. But our realization and living of plurality with a predominant focus on standpoint is different from a mode which emphasizes and practices sitting together and walking together. Furthermore, all these standpoints belong to a field, and from the perspective of the field each of these standpoints is partly true and also not partly true. Moreover, each of these standpoints is interpenetrated by the standpoint of others. For example, a Dalit standpoint on society is interpenetrated by a Brahminical standpoint in the ontology of reality as a field which holds both the Dalits and Brahmins together, even though both of them may deny that their standpoint is interpenetrated by the other. Similar is the situation vis-à-vis the standpoint of man and woman in society. While this is an aspect of reality which holds us, our epistemological construction of it is, on many occasions, one-dimensional, this being fuelled by an uncritical bondage to a single political ideology. In this context, how do we go beyond a one-dimensional epistemological construction of reality where the ontology of reality is inherently plural? How do we pluralize our plural standpoints, which at the level of self, ideology and even sociological method present themselves in a singular, absolutist and exclusionary way? Pluralizing plural standpoints calls for generosity and expansion of points of view into circles of views,[15] on the part of both participants and observers, which is not necessarily articulated and embodied in the sociological method that is prevalent today. This calls for *sadhana*,[16] striving, of multi-valued logic and living as well as a spiritual transformation of our consciousness, method, self and society, these being prone to clinging to the absolutism of a singular standpoint. *Sadhana* makes our knowledge, including our locational knowledge of standpoint, not just received and taken for granted but evolving, interpenetrative and emergent.

Multi-valued logic, as recently presented to us by J.N. Mohanty building upon multiple traditions of humanity, such as the Jaina tradition of *Anekantavada* (many paths to truth), Husserlian phenomenology of overlapping contents and Gandhian pathways of non-violence, emphasizes that

"every point of view is partly true, partly false and partly undecidable" (Mohanty 2000: 24).[17] This is different from a dualistic logic where each point of view claims absolutism for itself, or its absolutist claim is accepted at face value by the observer as well as the participant. One might claim absolutism for oneself but the fields of life, history and society compel us to realize the partial nature of our absolutist claims. This is also the calling of life. In life there is an inescapable pluralization, which calls for the cultivation of a multi-valued logic and living where we move beyond our initial standpoints and interact with each other, sometimes even going inside each other. Such a multi-valued logic and living embodies an art of autonomy and interpenetration where our autonomy is not fixed but transforms itself in the process of mutual interaction and communication.

One important aspect of multi-valued logic is overcoming what Sri Aurobindo calls the "egoistic standpoint" of subject positions or position of actors (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 258).[18] In sociology we mainly conceptualize, perceive and relate to actors as holders of social roles and social identities. But an actor as an occupant of social role and positional-cum-social identity such as a wife or a Dalit can enact a positional standpoint as an ego or a self. While one's egoistic standpoint can be more closed, one's standpoint as a self can be much more open. Transformational streams in psychology, sociology, philosophy and spiritual traditions urge us to realize the distinction between ego and self. Therefore, overcoming our standpoint as that of an ego and cultivating the standpoint of self in our enactment of positions and embodiment of transpositionality helps us to move beyond our own initial standpoints and be open to and embrace the standpoints of others. This contributes to the pluralization of our subject positions, first of all by realizing the subject position of self in place of the subject position of ego, overcoming positional fixation and realizing transpositionality and a multi-valued logic and living.

Multi-valued logic and living is an aspect of reality which needs to be understood and explored and not asserted. Here I am not making an a priori assertion about it but just pointing to the need for investigating multi-valued aspects of reality as an indispensable empirical task for sociology. At the same time, by investigating it empirically sociology can contribute to public enlightenment regarding the nature of its existence or lack of it, and in the process contribute to the normative task of contributing to building a self and society of pluralization. But this challenges sociology to understand some of its own limitations; for example, its uncritical bondage to a logic of dualism. In a dualistic sociology, the plurality of

standpoints is likely to be understood dualistically, and even left at that by the empirically minded sociologist. Despite ideological construction and the valorization of our absolutist standpoints, communications take place or fail, but in order to understand the lack of or failure of communication we also need a multi-valued sociology that pursues a multi-valued logic. Thus multi-valued logic and living challenges both sociology and ideology to pluralize; it challenges sociology to understand its own limitations, such as bondage to dualism, and to cultivate non-dual modes of investigation and cultivation of knowledge, self and society.

The *sadhana* of multi-valued logic and living challenges us to pluralize both sociology and ideology. For Béteille (2002), sociology is a modernistic project that is different from a project of tradition or postmodernism. This way, sociology becomes a part of the post-traditional telos of modernity.[19] But modernity is not only a condition of life; as the difficult journey of the modern world reveals and different critiques of it, such as those offered by Foucault and the postmodernists, have shown, modernity itself has an element of ideology. Following Béteille's own plea to maintain a distance between ideology and sociology, should not sociology maintain and self-consciously cultivate a distance from the ideology of modernity? If sociology is a study of our world, this world consists of plural modes and organizations of life—traditional, modern and postmodern. If sociology only follows the post-traditional teleology of modernity how can it study varieties of forms of life—traditional and modern as well as postmodern? These varieties of forms of life exist not only in the so-called traditional societies such as India or Lapland but in all contemporary societies—whether India, Indonesia, Sweden, France, Britain, Germany, Singapore, China or the USA. If sociology is only bound to an ideology of post-traditional telos of modernity, is it capable of even empirically understanding the plural worlds it claims to understand?

Plural Streams in Ideology and Theology and Challenges for Sociology

Pluralization is also a challenge for ideology. As already suggested, in the condition of ideological plurality there is a dimension of pluralization at work. During the Cold War, protagonists of communism and capitalism learnt how to live with each other in the world system. This was in the midst of violence, war and a propensity for mutual annihilation. This was not an easy co-existence, but for both sides there was no alternative.

Each side also influenced the other—socialism influencing welfare policies in capitalistic societies and market principles influencing the socialistic organization of the economy, leading to the principle and practices of market socialism. Therefore there was communication across the ideological divide, and despite and in the midst of difficulties, both sides learnt how to live together. This is an aspect of all ideological situations. For example, the way in which followers of different political parties with their different ideologies live in a social space, be it village or nation, point to an indispensable aspect of co-survival which is difficult and fragile. But to understand the ideological field as a practical field of life we need to move beyond a representational and typifying view of ideology and adopt a communicational view, especially a perspective that takes into account the pragmatics of communication. If we look at the work of ideologies from the point of view of pragmatics of communication we realize that ideologies are much more plural in their lived realities and histories. Béteille himself has shown us this in his discussion of plural streams within Marxism. This work of plural streams from the point of view of intellectual history, which is true of not only Marxism but also many other ideologies, can be linked to a pragmatics of communication which challenges us to realize plural streams in existing ideological practices and communication among them.

Plural streams in the discourse and practice of ideology also challenges us to understand plural streams in the theological and the theologian. Béteille writes: "The distinction between the normative and the empirical approaches is seen most clearly in the contrast between the theological and sociological approaches to the study of religion. The theologian is concerned primarily with questions of truth and efficacy of religious beliefs and practices. Such questions do not concern the sociologist in the same way. His primary aim is to observe, describe, interpret and explain the ways in which religious beliefs and practices actually operate" (2009: 204). But in the actual work of many theologians today there is a greater embodiment of an empirical approach to the study of religion, deploying social science methods such as participant observation, historical study and survey work. The work done by faculty and students at the Department of Christianity, University of Madras, led by the pre-eminent social theorist, philosopher and theologian Felix Wilfred, uses social science methods in the study of religions. The department is not confined only to the study of Christian religions: students and faculty who are Christians also study the religious practices of other religions employing the methods of social

sciences. As Felix Wilfred writes in his essay, "Christian Studies: The Contours of a Discipline and Its Future Prospects" in the Silver Jubilee Volume of the Department *Transforming Religion: Prospects for a New Society*: "In the Department of Christian Studies of the University of Madras, there have been several dissertations written through empirical investigations applying qualitative and quantitative methods of study" (2009: 244). As Béteille draws the distinction between sociology and theology, Wilfred draws the distinction between theology and Christian Studies:

> A good theology serves an important purpose of motivating and inspiring the believing Christian community by elucidating the meanings of the truths of faith and drawing its practical implications. But the discipline of theology has its serious limitations when done from within its religious precincts. […] Christian Studies does not necessarily call for confessional approach, nor does it exclude it. Therefore, those who believe explicitly in Christianity and those who are not Christians but are interested in knowing what Christianity is all about, could find that knowledge and continue their search. *This open-endedness is necessary to allow people of other faiths to find a point of intellectual intersection with Christianity. This could be different from what traditional theology projects.* (ibid.: 245; emphases added)

For Wilfred, Christian Studies (ibid.: 244) does not continue the project of an absolutist claim about one's religion:

> […] all religions fall into the temptation of claiming the particular belief system it represents as something universally valid. Christian Studies does not aim at such universalizing of the particular, which is a centripetal movement. Christian Studies needs to understand itself as part of a centrifugal movement. It tries to find the universal lying outside its boundaries and relates the particularity it embodies with this universality in a process of dialogue and inquiry.

Social science methods, including sociology and anthropology methods, become a partner in this process of moving outside one's boundary. At the same time, Christian Studies does not just give an objective picture of the subject of study because it does not pre-suppose that one can study religion or, for that matter, any aspect of reality without the involvement of the subject. But this involvement is not an extension of one's faith but a working out of one's role as a student of faith, religion and society. In the words of Wilfred:

> *Comparative religion, like its kindred discipline of phenomenology of religion, is non-judgmental about religion, and therefore it claims to give an "objective" picture of religion. Christian studies, on the other hand, presuppose that in the process of knowledge the subject is deeply involved. Many studies in sociology of religion have underlined that one does not understand a religion and its expressions unless one enters a certain way into the world of its believers.* Christian Studies does not pretend to give a neutral picture of Christianity, but goes into the world of faith of Christians as they would like to be understood. *This epistemological approach to Christianity—for that matter in the study of religion—does not necessarily presuppose faith in the student and researcher of this discipline.* (ibid.: 246; emphases added)

Some of the themes in Wilfred's narration here speak to themes in Béteille's discussion. For example, while presenting Srinivas's work as an epitome of the sociological approach to Hindu religion as different from a theological approach, Béteille nonetheless tells us how Srinivas did not like representations of his religion which he perceived to be misrepresentation: "He once returned from a seminar, infuriated by a participant who had described Hindu beliefs and practices as 'mumbo-jumbo'." (Béteille 2009: 205). Béteille reads Srinivas's reaction in this way: "It is no easy matter to remain detached, objective and value-neutral in the study of religion, and particularly of one's religion" (ibid.). But in showing his reaction, was Srinivas becoming less value neutral or was he expressing his genuine requirement that the religion that he was born with and that sustained his faith should be understood properly and, least of all, not misrepresented? This possible wish is a universal wish for all of us, wherever we come from: we want to be understood properly and with care and respect in terms of representation of our locational identities. In this way Wilfred's charting of a pathway for Christian Studies, as an effort to "go into the faith of Christians as they would like to be understood,"[20] resonates with Srinivas's possible wish that his religion should be properly understood. This does not mean, however, an uncritical glorification or "wholesale condemnation" (Béteille 2009: 205). But to understand one's own religion or that of others is not to impose one's a priori faith or belief upon one's study. This is the approach of sociology as well as that of Christian Studies, which does not necessarily presuppose "faith in the student and researcher of this discipline" (Wilfred 2009: 246).

In the University of Madras the Department of Christian Studies is part of the School of Philosophy and Religious Thought. There are also other departments, such as Islamic Studies, Vaishnavism, Buddhist Studies, Jaina

Studies and Saiva Siddhanta. At Oxford there are both the Oxford Centres of Hindu Studies and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, which are not however part of the University of Oxford. But I do not know if proponents of other religious studies departments within the University of Madras as well as the Oxford Centres of Hinduism and Islamic Studies have the same open-ended approach that Wilfred holds and make it clear not to impose their a priori religious beliefs about the study of their religion on others.

Though, similar to Béteille's distinction of sociology and theology, Wilfred makes the distinction between Christian Studies and theology (Wilfred's Christian Studies comes closer to Béteille's sociological approach), he, at the same time, as in the above-cited paragraph, challenges us to realize that in order to understand the religious life of a people we have to go inside it: it is not enough to stand outside as an observer. This challenges Béteille's approach to the sociology of religion, which prefers to stand outside and not enter into the religious belief of the believers.[21] Without entering the religious life of the believer, which is different from acting out one's faith or uncritically borrowing another's faith, how can the sociology of religion fulfill its task? This in turn calls for a simultaneous cultivation of the subjective and objective in one's study of religion and society.

Wilfred creates a distance from the theological approach to religion, starting with his own journey, at least formally, as a student and teacher of theology (see Gnanapragasam and Schussler Fiorenza 2008). This journey itself points to critical and self-transforming plural streams in the theological, which is much more than what is typified in the noun theology in both Béteille and Wilfred. What we find in Wilfred is a continuation of a rich legacy within theological engagement with religion, society and the world. Let us consider here the seminal work of Paul Tillich. Tillich was a theologian, but as a theologian he talked about the need for skeptical belief in matters of not only study of religion but in one's faith.[22] Such an articulation of faith—faith with skepticism and vulnerability—now finds a creative resonance from the other side of intellectual spectrum, for example from the shores of critical theory and post-metaphysical thought, where sociologists and philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas (2003, 2008) are challenging us to understand the limits of rational knowledge and rework our relationship between faith and knowledge. Habermas (2006: 5) pleads for a "complementary learning process" in which both people of faith and reason take part. In this learning process "true belief is not only a doctrine,

believed content, but a source of energy that the person who has a faith taps performatively and thus nurtures his or her entire life" (ibid.: 9). Habermas also urges us to realize that what is needed at this contemporary juncture is a "correlation of reason and faith, of reason and religion, both being summoned to mutual cleansing and healing."[23]

In the theological legacy we also find the inspiring work of Raimundo Panikkar (1977), who embodied deep and meditative pluralization. He studied the Vedas starting during his initial journey as a Catholic priest and his *The Vedic Experience Mantramanjari: An Anthropology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration* is a testament to the deep quest for the other from within theology. In our representation of theology in sociology we are invited to acknowledge these plural streams and cultivate them further (cf. Wilfred 2008; Vinayaraj 2010).[24] In these plural streams of theology there is a great deal of appreciation for sociological strivings as David Smith, an insightful contemporary theologian, writes: "Indeed, there are times when the work of contemporary sociologists is characterized by such depth and seriousness that one is inclined to think that they are the true inheritors of the ancient prophetic traditions working in the world today" (2007: 83). Similarly from the sociological side there is an openness to the theological. As Robert Bellah, the great sociologist of religion of our times, tells us: "Some of the systems theorists such as Parsons and Karl Deutsch have conceived of human action as multi-layered and open. Deutch, for example, has spoken of the propensity for all highly complex systems to break down, and has borrowed the theological term 'grace' to designate the indispensable but unpredictable situational conditions that seem to be necessary in order for any complex system to function at all" (1970: 241; also see Bellah 2011).[25] And John Clammer, himself a sociologist and anthropologist, urges us to understand the significance of theology in giving us a sense of whole and the need to pursue it in our complex world.[26]

Beyond the Dualism of the Empirical and Normative

This brings us finally to the difficult issue of the normative and the empirical. For Béteille, sociology has to study the empirical, but the empirical itself has many layers of reality and realizations. To study the empirical, sociology has to be much more than empirical and also go beyond empiricism as a singular method.[27] Moreover, the normative also has multiple meanings and modes of realizations. Normative does not just mean what is coded as norms and

expected and uttered by the formulaic interpreters and defenders of social norms. Normative also refers to aspirations, strivings and struggles to make life and society more beautiful, dignified and dialogical. Such a quest for the normative is not just an extension of existing norms in society, as most of these norms in traditional, modern and postmodern worlds are islands of problematic justice, dialogue and beauty. Normative refers to a dimension of *sadhana*, striving and struggle in our very existent world, and it is in that way a part of reality itself. It is a fragile, ambiguous and uncertain quest as the very project of life, reality and society, which nonetheless challenges us to understand and cultivate this normative quest for beauty, dignity, dialogue and pluralization in the midst of ugliness, violence and monological absolutism of various kinds. Should not sociology try to understand this quest of the normative and cultivate it further in self, culture, knowledge and society?

Notes

1. As, for example, in his M.N. Roy memorial lecture on "Marxism, Pluralism and Orthodoxy" presented near three decades ago Béteille (1982) argued how Marxism is not a singular and monolithic ideological system and consists of plural streams of reflections and practices.
2. It must be noted here that cultivating plurality of standpoints and facilitating communication among them is also part of the dialogue philosophies and works of our times. There is a long genealogy of multiplicity of standpoints in philosophy and other fields as exemplified, for example, in the works of Martin Buber (1958). There is also attention to plurality of standpoints beyond absolutism in the work of Karl Mannheim (1936), the pioneer of sociology of knowledge. John Clammer also here draws our attention to the work of John Paul Lederach in peace studies and Marjorie Green in philosophy (personal communication).
3. In his *Ideology and Utopia* Mannheim (1936: 75–76) writes:

> It may be true that every form of expression, in which we clothe our thoughts, tends to impose upon them an absolute tone. In our epoch, however, it is precisely the function of historical investigation […] to analyse the elements that make up our self-assurance, so indispensable for action in immediate, concrete situations, and to counteract the bias which might arise from what we, as individuals, take for granted. This is possible only through incessant care and determination to reduce to a minimum the tendency to self-apotheosis. Through this effort the one-sidedness of our point of view is counteracted, and conflicting intellectual positions may actually come to supplement one another. (ibid.: 75–76)

4. Here Marcus Bussey insightfully comments: "Phenomenologically they are experienced as absolute until some event shatters the illusion—transformation requires such a disjuncture so that identity can shift to incorporate multiplicity" (personal communication).
5. This is also true of M.N. Srinivas, whose sociological approach to religion Béteille celebrates. Srinivas did not study any other religion except Hinduism. Even his essay, "The Social Significance of Religion in India," does not discuss much the work and dynamics of non-Hindu religions in India (cf. Srinivas 2009; Giri 2010).
6. I draw this distinction from Nitasha Kaul's (2009) very illuminating discussion on the need for new kind of knowledge creation, which seeks to put different parts, especially forgotten and excluded parts, together. For Kaul, "[…] modernist knowledge needs to be haunted by a post-colonial memory, a re-membering, which can be instigated by placing the question of difference at the heart of the story. When one re-members, one does not simply recall—to re-member is to put it altogether again". As an example, the standpoint of knowledge participation and generation is a project, "not an inheritance".
7. In her reflections on standpoint theory in epistemology, for example feminist standpoint epistemology, Ahlstrom Kristoffer (2005: 88) tell us: "As standpoint theorists often emphasize (Harding included), a standpoint is an achievement. Women do not automatically accept a feminist standpoint just by virtue of being women, a standpoint has to be achieved, and the way to achieve it is to raise one's consciousness."
8. In this context, Shiv Visvanathan's description of the main character Jagannatha in the novel *Bharatipura* by U.R. Ananthamurthy shows us how one can embrace and grow into plural standpoints. What Visvanathan (2011: 70) writes deserves our careful consideration:

   > I think the genius of the book lies in the flat land called Jagannatha. He is a middling character […] Yet Jagannatha is a seed that grows in power because of the humus of characters around him. In every chapter, he almost absorbs another point of view. His self grows as he discovers the richness of the other he wants to change.

9. As Connolly writes: "A conventional pluralist celebrates diversity within settled contexts of conflict and collective action […] But what about the larger contexts within which the pattern of diversity is set? How plural or monistic are they? To what extent does a cultural presumption of normal individual or the preexisting subject precede and confine conventional pluralism?" (Connolly 1995: xiii).

10. As Mannheim (1936: 20) writes: "The world of external objects and psychic experience appears to be in a continuous flux. Verbs are more adequate symbols for this situation than nouns." What Connolly (1995: xxi) writes here provides us pathways of pluralism as multi-dimensional verbs:

    A pluralizing culture embodies a *micropolitics* of action by the self on itself and the small-scale assemblage upon itself, a *politics of disturbance* through which sedimented identities and moralities are rendered more alert to the deleterious effects of their naturalization upon difference, *a politics of enactment* through which new possibilities of being are propelled into established constellations, *a politics of representational assemblages* through which general policies are processed through the state, a *politics of interstate relations*, and a *politics of nonstatist, cross-national movements* through which external/internal pressure is placed on corporate and state-centered priorities.

11. We can note here the title of Béteille's (1998) essay "Comparative Method and the Standpoint of the Investigator." Béteille is a proponent of the comparative method, but this also raises the question whether comparative method from the standpoint of an observer would be same as one from the experiential perspective of participants.

    In a related note, Amartya Sen also seems to look at the human condition from the point of view of the observer, which is different from that of a participant. Sen, whose ideas have been presented above, talks about positional objectivity, but this objectivity is that of an observer: "[…] positionally dependent observations, beliefs, and actions are central to our knowledge and practical reason. The nature of objectivity in epistemology, decision theory and ethics has to take note of the parametric dependence of observation and observation on the position of the observer" (1994: 126). But here again there is the need of pluralization of the model and working of agents not only as observers but also participants. Sen talks about the need for positional objectivity, but once the agents are not only observers but also participants the objectivity that emerges is not only objective but also intersubjective and transsubjective. So we need to explore *transpositional subject-objectivity*—one which emerges out of pluralization of the subjects, border-crossing transmutations among positions and transformative cultivation of the objective and the subjective, including intersubjective and transsubjective.

12. We can look at the significance of the public sphere in both the modern as well as the pre-modern world, in terms of varieties of spaces of meeting

as well as working together to seek to bring people from different backgrounds together amidst continued challenges of exclusions. In terms of the possibilities that sitting together offers, my student Rajakishore Mahana in his work on tribal movements in Orissa shares an insightful lesson from his fieldwork. In his fieldwork, Harabati, one woman tribal leader from Raigarh Orissa told him that when there was intractable conflict between the visiting police and tribals of the village she asked all of them, police and the tribals, to sit down, and it helped to calm the situation.

13. We have many moving meditations on the significance of walking in human life and for our expanding self and world-realizations. For anthropologist Tim Ingold, "[…] walking is not the behavioral output of a mind encased within a pedestrian body. It is rather, in itself, a way of thinking and knowing—'an activity that takes place through the heart and mind as much as through the feet'" (Ingold 2011: S135). In his study of political processions in Tamil Nadu which is modeled on religious processions, Bernard Bates (2011) uses the term "walking utopia," which while creating the condition of fellowship among participants does not necessarily enable them to go beyond their initial religious and political standpoints. But we see this in other modes of walking, such as in the Warkari movement in Maharastra, which has a cross-caste dimension. As Dallmyr writes: "[…] periodic pilgrimages to Pandarpur are central to the Warkaris' life, but not in the same way as pilgrimage to other holy places such as Banaras or Dwarka. In the general Hindu tradition, the focus is typically on the destination of the pilgrimage, the sacred center of worship. But in the case of the Warkaris, the accent is not so much on the destination as on the journey itself" (Dallmayr 2007: 56). What Dallmayr suggests is that in the journey there is an openness to others which is different from one's location at home. This openness emerges in other occasions of journey and encounters as well. In the same book, where Dallmayr writes about the Warkari movement, he also presents us the following experience of a woman that he talked to after a train journey and the encounter that happened:

> […] I talked to another Indian woman, the wife of a senior professor of English at the University of Baroda. She told me the story of a strange happening—an event that startled her and left her wondering and amazed: She was traveling with her son by train from Delhi to Shillong, a journey of some twenty hours. In her compartment was a young man, a soldier in the Indian army. Given the long train ride, a conversation developed between them, starting at first haltingly and almost absentmindedly and then turning more serious. The woman had been raised in the Vaishnava tradition and had never devoted much thought to Muslim beliefs and

practices. During the conversation, it emerged that the young man was a Muslim—deeply religious and knowledgeable Muslim. Prodded by her questions, the young man began to talk about the Islamic faith, the long history of Islam, and the deeper meaning of Quranic passages. It was as if he illuminated from within a building that had always seemed to her dark and uninviting. As she confessed to me, she was profoundly moved by this sincere (and nonproselytizing) disclosure of faith, and something happened to her on that train ride that she had not planned or anticipated. Somehow—and she was not quite sure how—the encounter had transformed her, and opened her heart to new possibilities and a new dimension of human relations. (Dallmayr 2007: 257–258)

In his autobiography, *A Living Faith: My Quest for Peace, Harmony and Social Change*, Ashgar Ali Engineer also narrates a similar insight emerging during a meeting in walking:

Here, I would like to narrate an interesting encounter with a postman when I was in the 8th standard. In hindsight, I feel the postman was a very humble person but with a good understanding of religion. I was, on the contrary, very orthodox with the conviction that Islam was the only true religion. One day, the postman met me on the road and began to talk to me. He said in a very philosophical way that all paths, though they differ from each other, lead to God and that all paths are true. I protested and said that that could never be. For example, idol worship can never be a true path and it can never lead one to God. Islam believes only in one God and everything contrary to it is false. I remember the postman smiling at me and saying that if one has *shraddha* (faith) in idols that can also lead to God. I, however, stuck to my point and the postman left it at that. But whenever he met me, he smiled in a charming way.

I also used to read Sufi poetry, especially of the noted Sufi poet Mir Dard. His beliefs were of the kind that affirmed the truth of what the postman used to tell me. I could not quite fathom the stand he took […] This would leave me quite perplexed. (Engineer 2011: 11–12)

The above two narrations show how, in complex ways, walking does add an element of pluralization to our ontology and epistemology of standpoint. But to this condition of pluralization of walking and sitting on a train, we can also invite the experience of "sitting on a boat." It reminds us of the symbol of Noah's boat described in the Bible and also of the way in which Jesus and his followers sat on the boat and crossed over to the other side of the sea to meet people there who were considered other.

Since our present discussion involves the border-crossing dialogue between sociology and theology, what theologian Vinayraj writes about the significance of sitting on a boat deservers our careful attention:

> Sea, for Jews is a symbol of chaos. The land across this sea is pictured as a terrific land as we used to tell in the fairy tales. It is the abode of evils […] It is a place of violence and terror. In our society we use these imageries to talk about Dalit/Tribal colonies! By exhorting the disciples to "go across to the other side," Jesus asks them to deconstruct their subjectivity conceptions and move beyond to an existence of fraternity. Jesus shows his interest to talk to them by "sitting in the boat." The "boat" symbolizes the reconciliation between "shores." […] Here "crossing" means "bridging" and that is why it was a stormy journey for them. It was a symbolic journey from "hostility" to "hospitality". (Vinayaraj 2010: 50)

To the above experience we can add the recent effort of Freedom Flotilla, where activists protesting at Israel's blockade of Gaza were on a ship that was crossing over to Gaza. But the ship was brutally attacked by Israel and many activists from Turkey were killed.

14. During his walk in Noakhali to bring about peace among Hindus and Muslims, Gandhi said that the greatness of a person lies not only in the one or two spectacular things that one does in one's life but how much "dust" one collects on one's feet.
15. Management thinker and poet Subhash Sharma calls it omega circle, and is doing work on creating dialogues across this circle. See Sharma (2008).
16. For Marcus Bussey, "*Sadhana* as a quest, striving, struggle involves *tapasya*—a sacrificing of one's veil of certainty—and opening to dialogue via vulnerability and inner reflection" (personal communication).
17. What Mohanty (2000: 24; emphases added) writes helps us to understand the proposed multi-valued logic of autonomy and interpenetration:

> The ethic of non-injury applied to philosophical thinking requires that one does not reject outright the other point of view without first recognizing the element of truth in it; it is based on the belief that every point of view is partly true, partly false, and partly undecidable. A simple two-valued logic requiring that a proposition must either be true or false is thereby rejected, and what the Jaina philosopher proposes is a multi-valued logic. To this multi-valued logic, I add the Husserlian idea of overlapping contents. The different perspectives on a thing are not mutually exclusive, but share some contents with each other. The different 'worlds' have shared contents, contrary to the total relativism. *If you represent them by circles,*

they are intersecting circles, not incommensurable, [and it is this model of] intersecting circles which can get us out of relativism on the one hand and absolutism on the other.

This multi-valued logic also resonates with what J.P.S. Uberoi (2002), building on Goethe, Gandhi and the Hermetic tradition of Europe, calls "the four-fold logic of truth and method." In the paragraph above, Mohanty refers to the Jaina tradition of *Anekantavada*, about which what BP Singh writes deserves our careful attention:

Anekantavada wad directly related to Mahavira's philosophy of non-violence. We have to recognize that ordinarily violence is rooted in dogmatic and mistaken knowledge claim that fail to recognize other legitimate perspectives. *Anekantavada* provides us with an alternative epistemology to support dialogue among people of diverse viewpoints. It does not mean conceding that all views are valid. It does, suggest, however, that logic and evidence determine the validity of a given view. *Anekantavada* allows us to accept a pluralistic approach to reality. (Singh 2008: 96–97)

K.S. Singh, the heart-touching anthropologist and seeker of pluralism, also writes the following about *Anekantavada*, which is insightful:

It should be noted that while diversity of perceptions, approaches, and practices are recognized by some schools including those of the idealist philosophy, it is Anekantavada described by S. Radhakrishnan as a doctrine of realistic pluralism that tries to explore diversity logically and in depth.

[…] there are three tenets of Anekantavada. One, that there is a possibility of many perceptions of an object; two that everything is relative and multi-dimensional; and three, that there is an in-built co-existence of opposites, that one dimension is possible as another and it is only in relation to other factors like time, place, and context that one dimension gains predominance over another. All this is subsumed under the doctrine of *syadavada* or *saptabhangi*. From the acceptance of the multi-dimensional nature of objects and their probability is derived the moral imperative of *ahimsa* or non-violence. (2011)

18. In this context, what philosopher Ashok Gangadean tells us deserves our careful attention: "Spirituality is a philosophical point of view concerning the rational awakening that enables you to break free of your ego perspective, your closed view, the egocentric point of view, and become, instead

dialogical, open to multiple views. And it helps you to negotiate them. You become a more mature, awakened rational being" (Gangadean et al. 2000: 287). Mrinal Miri also talks about the need to overcome "egocentricity," which "distorts, to a greater or less extent, most of our perceptions of reality, and this is especially true of our perception of human reality" (2003: 42). Egocentricity also distorts our efforts to know another person; thus the need to overcome it. But for Miri,

> […] the overcoming of ego in attending to another person is never an isolated phenomenon; to be able to transcend one's ego is also to be able to achieve true humility; and with humility comes the realization of the infinite difficulty of being just to another person, the realization, in other words, of the ever-present possibility that one has blotted out, from one's attention, vital, if subtle aspects of the other person's behaviour. A natural accompaniment of such a realization on the way to achieving the true emotion of love, or what Gandhi might have meant by *ahimsa*. And it is the possibility of ahimsa in this sense that makes knowledge of the other as a person possible. (ibid.: 43)

Thus overcoming egocentricity helps one realize humility and *ahimsa* in one's knowledge of and relationship with the other, which also contributes to overcoming one's one-sided standpoint. In a related move, philosopher Peter Singer, who has also urged us to go beyond the anthropocentric standpoint and realize the suffering and pain of non-human beings, challenges us to cultivate "the point of view of the universe," "thereby transcending not only our individual point of view but the point of view of our society and species. Of course, Singer doesn't believe that the universe has a point of view, but he thinks that this is an apt metaphor for the human capacity to take up a standpoint of impartial and equal concern for the welfare of all sentient beings" (Nagel 2010: 26).

19. This is also the approach of Giddens and Beck (Beck et al. 1994).
20. In this context, what the Dalai Lama (2011: 19), writes is an inspiring example of how to understand religion other than one's own:

> For some people, then, the concept of a Creator, God, is very helpful. I once asked an old Christian monk why Christianity does not believe in previous lives. He said, 'Because this very life is created by God. Thinking that gives a feeling of intimacy with God. This body comes from our mother's womb and so we have a feeling of closeness and comfort with our mother. So. the same is the case with God. The closer one feels, the stronger the intention to follow God's advice, which is love, compassion.'

Therefore, the theistic approach is very powerful and much more helpful for many people than a non-theistic approach.

It must be noted here that many streams in Buddhism do not have a theistic approach, and the Dalai Lama is able to understand and appreciate the need for the theistic approach in Christianity. He also does not want anybody to convert from one religion to another, for example from Christianity to Buddhism. What he writes below is also an example of how one can go beyond oneself in understanding the religion of another person:

It is better to keep one's own religious tradition […] The best is to have information. This helps to develop respect. Therefore, keep your Christian tradition, if you are a Christian, but gain understanding and knowledge of other traditions. As for methods, all teach the same practice—love, compassion, tolerance. Since the practice is shared in common, it is alright to adopt some methods from Buddhism. But as for the Buddhist concept of no absolute—this is strictly Buddhist business. It is not helpful for others to learn. One Christian father asked me about emptiness, voidness, and I told him that this is not good for him. If I teach complete interdependence, this might harm his strong faith in God. So it is better for such people not to listen to talk about voidness. (ibid.)

While the above passage shows the remarkable generosity of the Dalai Lama, it leaves us with further questions. Are concepts from a religious tradition, such as emptiness from Buddhism, meant to be limited to the believers and practitioners of these traditions? Are they not universal? Even if they unsettle believers in other traditions, is there a responsibility to share and learn on the part of people in interaction. In interreligious interaction is there not a necessity to go beyond one's tradition and explore paths of seeking in emergent ways? Is it not possible to realize God even in Christian tradition not only as fullness but emptiness? The Dalai Lama and proponents of such view may note what Felix Wilfred and Bede Griffiths write below. For Wilfred (1999: xiii),

The Christian attempts to cross over to the other, to the different, has been made by and large from the pole of being or fullness. This naturally creates problems, which can be overcome by activating also to cross over from the pole of nothingness or emptiness. The central Christian mystery of Jesus Christ offers the revelation of both fullness and nothingness—the total self-emptying. Many frontiers which are found difficult to negotiate and cross over could be crossed by making use of the other pole represented in the Christian mystery of emptiness as self-abnegation, so as to reach a deeper perception of the mystery of God, the world and the self.

Perhaps here lies something that could become an important program for Christianity and its theology at the turn of the millennium.

For Griffiths, "[…] We often find that the Christian concept of God becomes personal that it needs to be corrected by the impersonalism of Buddhism" (Griffiths 1976: 86).

21. Borrowing the language of Weber, Béteille (2002) pre-sets his approach to religion as that of the "religiously unmusical".
22. Tillich (1957: 20) writes in his *Dynamics of Faith*:

The doubt which is implicit in every act of faith is neither the methodological and skeptical doubt. It is the doubt which accompanies every risk. It is not the permanent doubt of the scientist, and it is not transitory doubt of the skeptic, but it is the doubt of him who is ultimately concerned about a concrete context. One would call it the existential doubt, in contrast to the methodological and skeptical doubt. It does not question whether a special proposition is true or false. It does not reject every concrete truth, but it is aware of the element of insecurity in every existential truth. At the same time, the doubt which is implied in faith accepts this insecurity and takes into itself in an act of courage. Faith includes courage.

Tillich speaks about doubt in the act of faith which finds a resonance in Iqbal's approach to Islam. According to Ayesha Jalal, "[…] Iqbal asserted that the principle of doubt was the beginning of all knowledge. And the opening word in the Muslim creed, *la*—literally 'there is no God'—was a statement of that doubt. Without the power of negation in the *la*, the affirmation of God in *illaha ilallah* loses its true in meaning" (Jalal 2009: 461).

Tillich is a source of inspiration to critical practitioners of faith in Islam, such as Amina Wadud, who has fought against the religion's patriarchal structures. In her words:

I have fought the gender *jihad* to remove the blinkers that see only the illusion of fragmentation and then build structures and formulate systems to sustain the perception that it is real, and then to give divine sanction to the illusion of human independence from transcendent peace and unity […] The significance of Tillich's work was simply that it expressed itself in response to the moral-spiritual dilemma of modern consciousness. I ran up against a scarcity of information in response to such dilemmas from modern Muslim thinkers. They were obsessed with *realitic politique* (every-

thing was power, authority, and control) through the medium of legal operation. (Wadud 2006: 258–259)

This also shows how critical theological work transcends religious boundaries, as a woman in Islam who is struggling for gender justice is drawing inspiration from a Christian theologian.

23. Habermas shared this in his now famous dialogue with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who became Pope Benedict XVI) held on January 19, 2004 at the Catholic Academy in Munich, in which both agreed that: "Religions and secular rationalities need to engage in a mutual process of dialogue in order to learn from each other and to protect the planet from the destructive potential of the uncoupling of faith and reason" (Bellah 2008; Habermas and Ratzinger 2007; Eder 2007).

    Apart from this celebrated dialogue with the pope, Habermas had a long dialogue with the great theologian Johannes B. Metz from Germany that is relevant here. Metz has a critical-practical approach to theology as he writes: "It is surely true that the frontiers of modern theology runs across confessional boundaries. In this case, how could theology itself determine the distinctive unity of what it is concerned with? The quest, its dwelling place is not pure theology but […] faith in practice" (1970: 82).

    In his dialogue with Habermas, Metz had argued that reason cannot just continue the tradition of critical thought from Athens, that is from Greek tradition, it also must be open to the other tradition of reason what Metz calls "anamenestic reason," a reason which remembers the memory of struggle for self and spiritual transformation. For Metz, this is the tradition of Israel. For Metz, for a fuller realization of reason there should be interpenetration of both the tradition of Athens and the tradition of Israel. But Habermas in this dialogue, a decade ago, was reluctant to open the tradition of argumentative reason to the tradition of "anamenestic reason" of Israel. But with his contemporary rethinking of faith and reason in which Habermas argues that both sides should go beyond their absolutist claims, he may now be more open to such a foundational border-crossing, which has also deep implications for border crossing between traditions of critical sociology and liberation theology.

24. For Vinayaraj, doing theology involves a "new journey of re-understanding of our faith, theology and ontology. […] doing theology means reconstituting our ontology. Faith is a total commitment to the ongoing journey of finding ourselves dialogically" (2010: 32).

25. Another example of possible border crossing between sociology and theology is the simultaneous moves such as public sociology from sociology and public theology from theology which challenges both these disciplines to

be much more communicative with and responsible to the public (see Clawson et al. 2007; Wilfred 2010). In an Indian context, Dalit theology is an aspect of emergent public theology, but it is not asserting Dalit identity in an exclusionary way. Rather it is a "political theology that re-locates the 'missionized' as the social agents of a democratic civil society and envisage a dialogical community where everyone celebrates together their differentiated identities" (Vinayaraj 2010: 73). It would be insightful to explore further Dalit theology and Dalit sociology together.

26. Clammer is not shy of arguing that when sociologists have lost a sense of the whole it is the theological approach which constantly challenges us to not to forget that we are part of a bigger whole. In the words of Clammer:

> While in a secularized and globalised world in which many faiths contend for attention, as do the insidious demands of the consumerist culture of neo-liberal capitalism, theology (understood in its specifically Christian context) may well appear to have lost its status as 'Queen of the Sciences.' But perhaps not, since not only is (Christian) theology in a globalised world necessarily forced to confront the reality of other faith traditions and to enter into dialogue with them, but it also remains, even today, *the most integral of the disciplines, containing as it does history, linguistics, archaeology, anthropology, textual criticism, sociology, psychology and the applied dimensions of these fields in pastoral care, counseling, development and social work*, as well as its specifically 'religious' dimensions and their expressions in such areas as liturgy. With the rising perception that the roots of our current crisis are essentially spiritual, theology takes on a new salience, as witnessed by the number of students world-wide who enter the discipline with no intention of ever taking up a pastoral career. *In a world in which new models of education are urgently needed, theology, when informed and permeated by an Earth-spirituality (the definition of which in a Christian context is itself a challenge and an adventure), stands poised to renew itself and as such to provide a renewing force in the wider world, far outside the boundaries of the narrowly defined faith community.* (Clammer 2010: 226; emphases added)

> As sociologists we need to pursue the meaning and working of a bigger whole in our lives and society, though this whole is not necessarily the theistic whole of the theologian nor the systematic whole of the believer. The whole that invites both the sociologist and theologian is what philosopher Vattimo (1999) calls a "contingent whole" and Simogy Varga (2009) calls a "limited whole."

27. We may note here that in his insightful essay on M.N. Srinivas, T.N. Madan (2011) talks about the possibility of "transempirical understanding."

References

Bates, B. (2011). *Tamil Oratory and the Dravidian Aesthetic: Political Practice in South India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Beck, U., Giddens, A., & Lash, S. (1994). *Reflexive Modernization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bellah, R. N. (1970). *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*. New York: Harper Row.

Bellah, R. N. (2008, April 22). *Challenge of Secularism: Is God Absent?* Text of a lecture at University of Detroit Mercy.

Bellah, R. N. (2011). *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Béteille, A. (1980). *Ideologies and Intellectuals*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Béteille, A. (1982). *Marxism, Pluralism and Orthodoxy*. Delhi: India Renaissance Institute.

Béteille, A. (1998). Comparative Method and the Standpoint of the Investigator. *Sociological Bulletin, 47*(2), 137–154.

Béteille, A. (2002). *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Béteille, A. (2009). Sociology and Ideology. *Sociological Bulletin, 58*(2), 196–211.

Brooks, A. (2006). Feminist Standpoint Epistemology: Building Knowledge and Empowerment Through Women's Lived Experience. In P. Levy & S. Hesse-Biber (Eds.), *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* (pp. 53–82). Newbury Parks, CA: Sage.

Buber, M. (1958). *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Clammer, J. (2010). Learning from the Earth: Reflections on Theological Education and the Ecological Crisis. In J. Calmmer (Ed.), *Socially Engaged Religions* (pp. 221–229). Bangalore: Books for Change.

Clawson, D., et al. (Eds.). (2007). *Public Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Politics and the Profession in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Connolly, W. E. (1995). *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dallmayr, F. (2007). *In Search of The Good Life: A Pedagogy for Troubled Times*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.

Dallmayr, F. (2010). *Integral Pluralism*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What Is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia.

Eder, K. (2007). *Secularization, Desecularization and the Emergence of a Postsecular Modernity: Making Sense of the Religious Field in Europe*. Humboldt University, Berlin, Paper.

Engineer, A. A. (2011). *A Living Faith: My Quest for Peace, Harmony and Social Change*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.

Gangadean, A., Cousins, E., Muller, R., & Singh, K. (2000). A Dialogue on Global Thought and Spirituality. In T. Michael, J. Patrick Fitzgerald, & D. Rothenburg (Eds.), *A Parliament of Minds: Philosophy for a New Millennium* (pp. 281–300). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Giri, A. K. (2010). The Challenge of Understanding Indian Society: Critique, Generosity and Transformations. *Sociological Bulletin, 59*(2), 256–277.

Gnanapragasam, P., & Schussler Fiorenza, E. (Eds.). (2008). *Negotiating Borders: Theological Explorations in the Global Era: Essays in Honour of Prof. Felix Wilfred*. Delhi: ISPCK.

Griffiths, B. (1976). *Return to the Center*. London: Fount Paperbacks.

Habermas, J. (1997). Israel or Athens, or To Whom Does Anamnestic Reason Belong? On Unity in Multicultural Diversity. In D. Batsone et al. (Eds.), *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity and the Americas*. London: Routledge.

Habermas, J. (2003). Faith and Knowledge. In *Future of Human Nature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, J. (2006). Religion and the Public Sphere. *European Journal of Philosophy, 14*(1), 1–25.

Habermas, J. (2008). *Between Naturalism and Religion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, J., & Ratzinger, J. (2007). *The Dialectic of Secularization*. San Francisco, CA: The Ignatius Press.

Harding, S. (Ed.). (2004). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. New York: Routledge.

Ingold, T. (2011). Footprints Through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, S121–S139.

Jalal, A. (2009). Freedom and Equality: From Iqbal's Philosophy to Sen's Ethical Concerns. In K. Basu & R. Kanbur (Eds.), *Arguing for a Better World: Essays in Honour of Amartya Sen* (pp. 452–469). Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kaul, N. (2008). *Imagining Economics Otherwise*. London: Routledge.

Kristoffer, A. (2005). Incorporating Feminist Standpoint Theory. *Nordic Journal of Philosophy, 6*(2), 79–92.

Madan, T. N. (2011). M.N. Srinivas: The Man and His Work. In *Sociological Traditions and Perspectives in the Sociology of India* (pp. 174–194). Delhi: Sage Publications.

Mannheim, K. (1936). *Ideology and Utopia*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Metz, J. B. (1970). Does Our Church Need a New Reformation? A Catholic Reply. *Concilium, 4*(6), 81–91.

Miri, M. (2003). On Knowing Another Person. In *Identity and Moral Life* (pp. 35–45). Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mohanty, J. N. (2000). *Self and Other: Philosophical Essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Nagel, T. (2010). What Peter Singer Wants of You. *New York Review of Books, LV11*(5), 24–26.

Panikkar, R. (1977). *The Vedic Experience Mantramanjari: An Anthopology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas.

Rolin, K. (2006). The Bias Paradox in Feminist Standpoint Epistemology. *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology, 3*(1), 125–136.

Sen, A. (1994). Positional Objectivity. *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 22*(2), 126–145.

Sharma, S. (2008). *New Mantras in the Corporate Corridors*. Bangalore: New Age International.

Singh, B. P. (2008). *Bahudha and the Post 9/11 World*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Singh, K. S. (2011). *Diversity, Identity, and Linkages: Explorations in Historical Ethnography*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Smith, D. (2007). *Moving Towards Emmaus: Hope in a Time of Uncertainty*. London: SPCK.

Sri Aurobindo. (1962). *The Human Cycles*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Asrham.

Srinivas, M. N. (2009). *The Oxford India Srinivas*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

The Dalai Lama. (2011). The Relevance of Religion in Modern Times. *Integral Liberation (Journal of Bangalore Social Action Trust), 15*(1), 15–23.

Thoreau, D. (1975). Walking. In C. Bode (Ed.), *The Portable Thoreau*. New York: Penguin.

Tillich, P. (1957). *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Harper & Row.

Uberoi, J. P. S. (2002). *European Modernity: Truth, Science and Method*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Varga, S. (2009). Sub Specie Aeternitatis: An Actualization of Wittgenstein on Ethics and Aesthetics. *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics, 39*, 35–50.

Vattimo, G. (1999). *Belief*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Vinayaraj, Y. T. (2010). *Re-Visiting the Other: Discourses on Postmodern Theology*. Tiruvalla, Kerala: Christian Sahitya Samiti.

Visvanathan, S. (2011, March). Review of U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Bharatipura*. *Seminar* 619, 68–70.

Wadud, A. (2006). *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. Delhi: Viva.

Wilfred, F. (2008). Christological Pluralism: Some Reflections. *Concilium, 3*, 84–94.

Wilfred, F. (2009). Christian Studies: The Contours of a Discipline and Its Future Prospects. In F. Wilfred (Ed.), *Transforming Religion: Prospects for a New Society* (pp. 241–259). Delhi: ISPCK.

Wilfred, F. (2010). *Asian Public Theology: Critical Concerns in Challenging Times*. Delhi: ISPCK.

Wittgenstein, L. (1958). *The Blue and Brown Books*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

CHAPTER 11

Afterword: Beyond a Materialist Sociology

Marcus Bussey

As a child I always enjoyed taking clocks to pieces. There was a real pleasure in examining each inner piece of the system. The precision of this machine that measured time delighted me. When I held the spring that energised the system it felt as if I held the soul of this time machine. Yet, as you may guess, I was never able to put the clock back together. This is the problem with systems—we can pull them apart but something reconstructive always eludes us. Even though the spring held the energy my young mind thought of as the soul, the spring itself lay loose and unmoving upon its extraction. This has led me on a long search for the soul in things. I have discovered that we cannot access this intangible element through conventional methods of reductive analysis, even though this process is its own reward. My approach has been to solicit various intuitive, embodied, creative, aesthetic and spiritual modalities to delve beyond the conventional givens of my Western tradition's epistemic processes.

Analogy has been one such creative method. For instance, if I think of the 'Church of Sociology', understanding the discipline as a religion rooted in Enlightenment yearnings and longing for liberation through epiphanies realised via the scientific method and channelled through the words, insights and actions of various prophets, then I can see what the problem is. David Tacey, for instance, captures such a condition when he observes:

M. Bussey (✉)
University of the Sunshine Coast, Sippy Downs, QLD, Australia

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2_11

> Every spiritual revolution is an attempt to recover a living spirituality from the deadening effects of religiosity. Religion is easier than spirituality, because everything is done at a distance, through clergy and middlemen, through doctrine and law. *The spirit tires of this lack of authenticity and starts to disrupt the religious systems to generate change*. The cycle of civilization is about maintaining an authentic spirituality in the face of the arthritic pressures exerted by lawmakers who think they know how to dispense justice and discern God. (2015: 72)

Beyond Sociology is a text that responds to this need for authenticity. In this edited volume we find a number of thinkers investigating the aporias immanent to all essentialist yearnings for clear and coherent boundaries. It is an important response to the fact that our world has gone 'pear shaped'. As scholars struggle to define, analyse, reinvent the world around them they are confounded by the *constant rejection* of the object of our gaze—the so called 'world out there'—of such definitions, analyses and reinventions. The sociological spirit cannot be contained within a singular monotheistic disciplinary frame as its subject—the 'world out there'—is far too glorious, too textured, too intimately part of us to be contained within neat academic boundaries.

We are living in what Ziauddin Sardar has quipped are *post-normal times* (2010). Sociology has for a long period appeared to have a clear mandate to study society. But what does this mean? What does it involve? The authors who have contributed to this volume suggest it now requires us to *go beyond* whatever answers are currently proffered to these classic undergraduate questions.

In *Beyond Sociology* Ananta Kumar Giri and his colleagues have taken up this challenge. Their collected thoughts explore, from a range of perspectives, the interesting question of what to do with boundaries in a post-normal world. Boundaries make us feel safe, secure, but they also confine us. Much of the tension in this bounded dilemma is that we are at a point when those essentialist yearnings of an earlier stage in the history of ideas are confounded by the self-evident failure of boundaries to answer deep questions and speak to and for deeper truths. Sociology is not alone in this, of course—all disciplines are being deeply challenged. Yet, as Clammer notes in his chapter, sociologists are now being called to go deeper into the mess of life and its relational flows. Thus he notes:

> Sociology has in fact both underestimated the complexity of social processes and their rootedness in biology (the body, mortality, health and illness), ecology and elaborate but not fully articulated meaning and creativity

> systems (of which formal religions and formal art are simply institutionalized expressions), and has overestimated the ability of sociologists to formulate true and accurate models of those processes.

It is always the case that the powerful underestimate the weak. Yet weakness is often the guise of rich alternative murmurings, and is always the label applied by the powerful to those who do not fit the systems designed to contain them. Dahl speaks to this point in his critique of agency and victimhood as offered in sociological and anthropological discourse. Today, as the air crackles with contradictions and the deep violences of people struggling to impose boundaries on both themselves and others, being a victim is just one category amongst many for describing the pain of growing beyond bounded identities into a pluralised universe of co-travellers. Yet even this statement sanitises the fact that suffering is real, injustice manifest everywhere and abundance—the disowned in a materialist universe—is illusory.

This last point is a central feature of this set of chapters: the *materiality and religiosity of sociology has impoverished the discipline*. It denies the possibility of spirit walking amongst us. It denies the traditions of spirit touched on by many of the authors in this book. Thus Ananta Kumar Giri (Chap. 3) speaks to a 'surplus of meaning' (citing Fuch 2004) that promises to inundate the dry world of materialist sociology and challenge the biopolitics (Agamben 1998) at work in reducing all to discrete individuals in a depoliticised social void. Similarly, Philip Wexler (Chap. 5) argues that 'a "new mysticism" arises at the conjuncture of: this de-politicization; the continuing intensification of the "cult of the individual"; and a reduction in the transcendental system of theistic belief in favor of inner-life spirituality'. Daya Krishna in addition draws on a rich intercivilisational strand of thinking, tracking the spiritual into the cultural domain and challenging the Eurocentric nature of traditional sociology—its geophilosophical roots as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) called it—with the alternative and equally rich epistemological and ontological insights and narratives of traditional Hinduism and Buddhism.

The spiritual and the mystical are zones of existential possibility that have eluded sociologists who prefer to focus on the structural and collective religious dimensions. But we need not mark out spirituality or religion for special attention. Strydom's (Chap. 8) focus on the emergence of an integrated cognitive social science takes evolution and a weak naturalism as a starting point for rethinking the practice of social theory. Evolutionary biology combines here with critical theory to go

beyond traditional sociological concerns and embrace an integrated cognitive social science committed to the 'expansion and justifiable development of the socio-cultural world by means of explanatory critique'. Once again the folded nature of our epistemic and ontological fields is questioned and opportunities arise from the rupture points where hybrid forms of engaging the social beyond the sociological come into their own.

This whole process is as exciting as it is disturbing. As new forms of interrogating and engaging our world emerge, old ones are rethought, expanded and rejected. This thinking is an important practice in which many voices from many fields are coming together not to sing a requiem for a dying 'Church of Sociology', but instead to point towards new possibilities for the field. Conceptual creativity is called forth in such work. The sociological imagination expands as the cultural resources of the postnormal generate new forms to think by and new conditions to think through. The sun may be setting on certitude, but that is not a bad thing. We are finding, through struggle and pain, through camaraderie and joint effort, a new space to engage with the human challenges before us. Fragmentation, loss of meaning and purpose, the degradation and commodification of local cultures, a pervasive sense of loss, flagrant injustice and ecological terrorism all demand our attention. This is fomenting what Paul Hawken (2007) called a 'blessed unrest'. The local and the universal meet in this unrest as complements to the unfolding drama of Being-Becoming in which we find the inherent local in the social. This unrest, to which this collection of chapters speaks, invites introspection and also a collective effort to step beyond old patterns of self-definition into richer and more nuanced hopeful patinas of identity.

References

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What Is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.

Hawken, P. (2007). *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came Into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*. New York: Viking.

Sardar, Z. (2010). Welcome to Postnormal Times. *Futures, 42*(5), 435–444.

Tacey, D. (2015). *Beyond Literal Belief: Religion as Metaphor*. Melbourne: Garratt Publishing.

Index[1]

A
Adorno, T., 78, 90n10
Agency, 6, 40, 59, 173–188, 223
"Agents-not-Victims" trope, 173
Ananthamurthy, U. R., 207n8
Ankersmit, F. R., 41, 42
Anthropocentrism, 3, 34, 35, 55, 61, 66, 105
Attribution Theory, 181
Authenticity, 62, 82, 222

B
Badiou, A., 59, 60, 72, 79, 90n13, 90n15, 90n17
Baldamus, W., 115n4
Bates, B., 209n13
Bauman, Z., 31, 61, 102
Beck, U., 1, 29, 31, 36, 57, 118n22, 213n19
Bellah, R. N., 95, 102, 111, 118n26, 205, 216n23
Bernasconi, R., 118n25
Berry, T., 66
Beteille, A., 1, 7, 45, 193–195, 197, 198, 200–205, 206n1, 207n1, 208n11, 215n21
Bhaskar, R., 35, 36, 38–41, 46n5, 46n6, 59, 72, 81
Biopolitics, 223
Blumer, H., 5, 6, 146, 154–163, 166, 169, 170n2, 170n3
Bourdieu, P., 37, 41, 44, 47n8
Bourgois, P., 185
Brandom, R., 72, 79, 89n3
Buddhism, 15, 24, 25, 57, 62, 63, 214, 215n20, 223
Bussey, M., 8, 207n4, 211n16, 221–224

C
Civilizations, 5, 21, 25, 55, 57, 124, 127, 222
Clammer, J., 2–5, 40, 44n1, 53–66, 205, 206n2, 217n26, 222
Cognitive sociology, 71, 88
Collins, R., 127, 128

[1] Note: Page numbers followed by "n" refer to notes.

A.K. Giri (ed.), *Beyond Sociology*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6641-2

'Concrete Abstractions,' concept of, 183
Confucianism, 163
Consequentialism, 59, 64, 88, 133
Cosmos, 35, 44, 56–58, 128, 133–139
Cousins, E.H., 113
Critical social analysis, 71–79, 88
Critical theory, 64, 72, 76, 78, 88, 89n7, 90n15, 97, 98, 109, 142, 204, 223

D
Dahrendorf, R., 38
Dalai Lama, 62, 214n20
Dallmayr, F., 40, 43, 44, 47n8, 47n10, 48n10, 48n11, 93, 105, 106, 116n13, 196, 209n13, 210
Deep ecology, 4, 57, 61–63, 66
Dialectics, 4, 71–90, 102, 105, 109, 111, 115n9, 116n12
Differential profundity, 5, 6, 145–170
Discourse, 2, 4, 6, 8, 35, 39, 43, 53–56, 63, 64, 71–76, 88, 89n1, 93–118, 135, 136, 173, 175, 178, 181, 182, 184–186, 188, 196, 201, 223
Discursive power, 178
Durkheim, E., 18, 37, 54, 56, 60, 123, 130, 141

E
Ecological self, 57, 61, 64
Egocentricity, 213n18
Elias, N., 30
Embodied, 5, 7, 8, 26, 46n6, 66, 138, 141, 179, 198, 205, 221
Engineer, A. A., 210n13
Ethics of representation, 175
Eurocentrism, 3, 54

F
Fairclough, N., 71–76, 81, 88, 89, 89n1, 89n4–6, 89n8, 187
Faubion, J. D., 37
Feminist theory, 175
Foucault, M., 2, 34, 200
Freitag, M., 31, 32
Fuchs, M., 32, 58, 59

G
Gangadean, A., 212n18
Giddens, A., 1, 45n3, 63, 86, 113, 174, 179, 187, 213n19
Gnostic individuals, 113
Gorz, A., 31, 45n2
Greco, J., 40
Grenzsituationen, 12
Griffiths, B., 214n20

H
Habermas, J., 2, 4, 31, 37, 45n3, 72, 73, 78, 89n2, 89n4, 90n16, 93, 94, 96–112, 114n2, 115n4, 115n6, 115n9, 116n11, 116n13, 117n7, 204, 205, 216n23, 1114n3
Hegel, G. W. F., 72, 78, 79, 87, 89n3, 90n15, 90n16, 106
Heidegger, M., 43, 44, 47n7–10, 48n11, 181
Heilman, S., 56
Heller, A., 105, 116n14
Homo sociologicus, 38
Horkheimer, M., 78, 90n14

I
Imagination, 1, 16, 22, 32–34, 56, 59, 77, 78, 103, 115n8, 134–138, 224

Inference, 4, 72, 74–88, 89n2, 89n7, 90n10
Ingold, T., 209n13
Intention as moral basis, 174
Inter-being, 3, 57
Interpretativist sociology, 146

J
Jalal, A., 215n22
Jewish mysticism, 124, 128
Jonas, H., 109, 118n21
Jullien, F, 165–168

K
Kabbalah, 5, 135–138, 141, 142
Kaul, N., 207n6
Kleinman, A., 182, 184, 185
Kristoffer, A., 207n7

L
Laclau, E., 105, 106
Lamb, S., 177
Liberal Individualism, 180, 186
Linguistification of the sacred, 98, 104
Luhman, N., 47n9, 90n14–16

M
Madan, T. N., 8, 217n27
Mencius, 5, 6, 158, 162–169, 170n3
Metz, J. B., 112, 216n23
Mintz, S. W., 45n3
Miri, M., 213n18
Mohanty, J. N., 198, 199, 211n17
Mopsik, C., 138, 142
Moral consciousness, 4, 23, 26, 93–118
Mysticism, 4, 5, 123–142, 223

N
Naess, A., 62, 66
Nagel, T., 213n18
Naturalism, 223
Nietzsche, F., 34, 36

O
Ontological epistemology of participation, 3, 29–48
Ontological sociality, 3, 30–33, 35, 42, 45n2
Ontologies, 1, 29, 32, 33, 35, 37–40, 43, 44, 47, 47n8, 60, 99, 103, 154–156, 198, 210, 216n24

P
Pande, G.C., 103
Passivity, 176, 178, 179, 184, 186
Pattern of cultivation, 111
Peirce, C. S., 72, 75, 77–80, 86, 89n2, 89n7, 90n9, 90n16
Pillai, P. V., 43
Pollock, S., 36, 46n4
Pope Benedict XVI, 216n23
'Positive thinking', 186
Post-Normal, 222, 224
Practical discourse, 76, 99, 100, 111–114
Practical spirituality, 40, 98, 111–114
Public theology, 216n25

Q
Qi, 6, 163–169, 170n5

R
Radhakrishnan, R., 36, 212n17
Rorty, R., 115n8
Rose, N., 186

S
Scholem, G., 123, 124, 128–130, 137, 141
Schutz, A., 6, 146–153, 158–163, 166, 169, 170n2, 170n3
Self-definition, 178, 224
Self-transformation, 5–7, 29, 145–170, 194
Sen, A., 118n23, 208n11
Sharma, S., 211n15
Singer, P., 213n18
Singh, K. S., 212
Smith, A., 41
Smith, G., 174, 179, 183
Sociology, 1–8, 29–48, 53–66, 123–142, 145–170, 173, 175, 193–217, 221–224
Spirituality, 2, 4, 40, 59, 62, 98, 103–105, 108–114, 126, 128, 130, 131, 134, 137, 140, 141, 212n18, 222, 223
Sraddha, 2
Srimad Bhagavad Gita, 2
Srinivas, M. N., 207n5, 217n27
St. Augustine, 105
Strathern, M., 59, 63
Sunstein, C. R., 186
'Survivors', 176, 181, 188n2

T
Tagore, R., 44, 111
Taylor, C., 61, 103–105, 115–116n10, 116n11
Thich, N. H., 3, 57, 62
Touraine, A., 31, 45n2, 58, 59
Trans-being, 3
Troeltsch, E., 123, 124, 126, 127, 129, 130, 141

U
Uberoi, J. P. S., 35, 36, 105, 212
Unger, R.M., 59, 105, 106, 116–117n15, 117n16

V
Varga, S., 217n26
Vattimo, G., 40, 47n7, 217n26
Victim mentality, 176, 178, 187
Victimology, 175, 177, 183
Victims, structural, 183
Victim status, claims to, 177, 182
Vinayraj, Y. T., 211n13
Visvanathan, S., 207n8
Vivekananda, S., 112, 113

W
Wadud, A., 215n22
Wagner, G.R., 111
Wallerstein, I., 35, 36
Walzer, M., 105, 117n16
Warkari movement, 209n13
Weber, M., 2, 4, 5, 31, 39, 104, 123–130, 133–135, 137, 139, 142, 147, 215n21
Williams, B., 102
Women's studies, 173

Z
Zipprian, H., 111