

SOCIOLOGY AS A "CALLING": A DESULTORY MEMOIR

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Thus it is that the ineptitude of sociology, filling people's heads with confused ideas, has finally become one of the plagues of our times. Sociology, in short, is not abreast of the times, and so the times, badly buttressed, fall headlong into destruction.

Ortega Y. Gasset.¹

My inward "calling" is scholarly work and scholarly teaching. And the nation does not need that now. So I shall have to try to reorient myself. But how? To what?.... But in spite of all this, life is important and will again find beauty.

Max Weber.²

I

It is not easy to identify the reasons why an individual chose the vocation he did. I begin this Memoir with an attempt to unravel some aspects of this important, though nebulous, problem area in the sociology of knowledge. It was Durkheim in his doctoral dissertation, who challenged the fallacious view that in societies lacking specialization, personality was much more "complete" than in those in which the division of labour had advanced. Activity becomes richer and more intense as specialization proceeds apace.³ Such specialization extends one's life-chances. On the other hand, in small rural communities occupational choice was restricted, the education and experience of peasants qualifying them, by and large, to farming or crafts ancillary to agriculture such as the fabrication of ploughs and sickles. The monk was the repository of knowledge, but since preparation for that respected vocation was a protracted process, few embarked on it. Outside the rural sector townsmen who could choose from a much wider range of occupations may be compelled to confine their choice to one with a short "waiting period" spent on training and apprenticeship prior to securing gainful employment because they could ill afford a long period spent in acquiring qualifications.

In the secular occupations generally, the longer the training, the higher the pecuniary reward. The impoverished youth with no means of support save his expertise, has to content himself with careers of lesser social status, as measured by earning capacity. Above the unskilled category of peons and labourers the goal may be that of apothecary pharmacist, rather than doctor. Hence in the "learned professions" the less affluent were faced with the overriding need for immediate income-generating employment not money-making *per se*, associated with the despised trader or usurer, but occupations conferring a minimal social status in the white collar spectrum. Paradoxically, in the case of

1. Ortega Y. Gasset, *Man and people* New York, 1957.

2. Max Weber, Letter of 10 October 1918.

3. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, Glencoe, 1947 ed.

doctors the "waiting period", despite the lengthy period of medical education, was shorter than in the legal profession. In the latter, two or three years after having been called to the Bar, it was necessary to maintain a semblance of the affluent life-styles, the "conventional level of prodigality" of the pattern-setting, westernised bourgeoisie at the turn of the century. This was not possible if the lawyer had no private means through dowry or inheritance, as the briefs that came his way at the start of his career, were usually few and far between. Lucian de Zylwa was prompted to take to medicine, for which he had shown no special aptitude or interest, and was therefore not a "calling" *stricto sensu*, for that reason. Situational imperatives outside his control determined his life-chances.⁴ Had he the means he would in all probability have been equally distinguished as a lawyer or civil servant.⁵

Fortuitous factors may indeed play a decisive role in occupational choice. The untimely death of the bread winner may abruptly stall a youth's ambitions, or his father's imprudent plans for his social advancement through education. In the mid-nineteenth century James D'Alwis was a fortunate exception. Although his father's premature death left him in straightened circumstances, he completed his legal studies in the face of adversity and discouragement, by taking part-time employment. One of the Burgher judges who acted as his examiner asked irritably why Sinhalese youths aspired to be lawyers instead of cultivating their paddy fields, he simply said that he has no paddy fields.⁶ His contemporary, James A. Dunuwila, a leading kandy lawyer sent a son, one of ten children, to a private school in Cheltenham, England, to imbibe *in situ* the culture he so admired.⁷ But owing to his untimely death the boy had to be recalled and be satisfied with a job as a journalist, having no affluent relatives, nor a scholarship, to enable him to continue his studies abroad.

Without being aware of it, the cultural background can influence one's career. A survey of Nobel science prizemen of the first half of the present century revealed that none of them hailed from parental backgrounds which could be described as "humble."

4. According to Ralf Dahrendorf. (*Life Chances* London. 1979) an individual's life chances are "a function of options and ligations, choices and linkages"

5. As a government scholar in London he weighed the pros and cons of three possible career options. Law was ruled out as he could not afford the long "waiting time", to chance the Civil Service examination was too hazardous, as the number taken in was restricted, and varied from year to year, Medicine was the only realistic choice. A contemporary of Ananda Coomaraswamy at University College, London, de Zylwa was a man of exceptional talent and wide-ranging interests. He frequented the theater for English and French plays, attended concerts, published a tract on reason, on reason and emotion, besides three novels, and gave private tuition in Latin. Lucian de Zylwa, *Scenes of a Lifetime: An Autobiography*, Colombo, 1967.

James D'Alwis, *Memoirs and Desultory Writings*, 1876, ed.A.C. Senewiratne, Colombo, 1936.

7. Dunuwila corrected the English in his son's letters, stressing the importance of correct English usage, now that the boy was living, as it were in an English atmosphere.

The father's occupation required skill, judgment, powers of observation, and an elitist cultural background which, understandably, is vaguely defined.⁸ The great physicist, Albert Einstein was a competent violinist, and played Mozart's sonatas with Artur Schnabel at the piano. The question as to why an individual came to be an accounts clerk rather than an apothecary (status-wise two middle-level occupations taken at random) may depend entirely on contingent factors. The apparently ruthless system of primogeniture prevailing in England, "if it did not drown all the kittens but one, threw all but one into the water; pouring the martyrs of that prudent egotism, the younger sons, not only into the learned professions, but into armies, English and foreign, exploration and colonisation, and every branch of business enterprise."⁹ The system gave the eldest male heir of the English gentry the title and the estate, diverting the younger sons into a great range of occupations including the Church, and the civil service at home and in the colonies. It prevented the younger sons, the *nobiles minores* from being "precipitated into the proletariat" which was the case elsewhere in consequence of colonial expansion in our own country, whole segments of the Kandyan aristocracy came to be pauperized and proletarianized.

In Ceylon the affluent parent, anticipating the possibility of unemployment of sons backward in book-learning ("he can't learn", as the Ceylonism went) purchased an "estate", usually a coconut plantation in the vicinity of his natal village and sent his unlearned sons to the local farm school, or to Bangalore or Poona in preparation for a career as gentleman-farmer. He resided in the estate bungalow, often joined by aged grandparents suffering from senile dementia. I vividly remember an exasperated teacher in the leading secondary school, Royal College, telling his class of 1936, "I suppose you will join the ranks of the unemployed", to which one boy retorted "we can be landed proprietors".¹⁰

As we have already said, in certain cases parental background was the key to occupational choice, at times the sole determinant of one's "calling." The case of the Bach family which produced generations of musicians in Germany, is well known. Classical Indian music had a tradition of eminent *ustads* whose offspring imbibed the artistic heritage and oftentimes became distinguished virtuosi themselves. Such origins are less common in other fields, and we live in an age of unprecedented occupational mobility. The eminent Indologist, Wilhelm Geiger (sometime editor of the official Sinhalese Dictionary) fathered the inventor of the Geiger counter. The educational system can play a decisive role, — a high percentage of Nobel scientists came from large university centres of excellence. John Maynard Keynes, Fellow of King's College Cambridge was offspring of a leading philosopher and economist of the same university, John Neville Keynes. In the humanities a critical mass of like-minded scholars can constitute a "school", such as the Frankfurt School of Sociology.

8. Leo Rougin, "The Noble Prizes in the Sciences for 1901-1950 an Essay in Sociological Analysis," *British J. Sociol.*, 1955: 246-253.

9. R.H. Tawney, "The Rise of the Gentry", *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XI/i. 1941.

10. The incident caused me great anxiety at the time, as my father had no "estates", nor had my maternal grandfather parted with the land he promised my mother as dowry. I realized that deviation from the goal of the learned professions, if not the civil Service, would result in declassé status.

In Ceylon specialization was limited by the narrow range of career opportunities of an elitist kind, the lowest in terms of status being that of graduate teacher, the highest the prestigious Civil Service. The assumption was that a good first degree, whether in arts or science, made a versatile administrator, a fair-minded magistrate, provincial Agent, or head of a government Department such as Income tax or Customs collection. The Director of Agriculture could be a history graduate. Recruitment of natives to the civil service was however a tardy process, and proceeded apace only after World War II, although there were eminently qualified graduates long prior to that.¹¹ A candidate suspected of nationalist leanings could be eliminated by giving him low marks at the viva voce examination which functioned as a screening device to keep out "undesirables". The government service took in a small number of specialists, eg. mathematics graduates as engineers and surveyors. Others were recruited as lecturers to the fledgling University College, a government Department founded in 1921, affiliated to London University. But supply was far in excess of demand, as measured by the capacity of the state to pay relatively high salaries, rather than "felt need". We needed many more doctors in state hospitals before and during World War II, but official reports boasted that the country was well served by health care services, based on impressionistic estimates at variance with real needs. The gross over-estimate that three-fourths of the population patronized indigenous physicians an estimate which was uncritically accepted throughout the present century based on a conjectural figure in the *Ceylon National Review* -- was an excuse for a haggling stinginess in providing employment for western qualified practitioners. The ravages of the malaria epidemic of the 'thirties came as a rude shock to the authorities, and a "waiting list" maintained by the Health Department came in handy for the recruitment of a cadre of Field Medical Officers at the ludicrous monthly salary of Rs. 150. There was no like pressure for the recruitment of lawyers -- apart from the bench and the state law departments, the provincial courts were presided over by unqualified civil servants and the village tribunals of the interior by local chiefs.¹² In evaluating the security afforded by a vocation, one should examine the fate of the failures, rather than the exceptional success stories -- according to a recent authority, "the fate *not* of the successful, but of the unsuccessful".¹³ During the Depression the fact that many lawyers were destitute was masked by the fortunes amassed by a few illustrious advocates.

11. Whereas there were 72 Britishers and Burghers (Dutch Descendants and) only 3 natives in 1863, the ratio was 49:120 in the year prior to Independence (1947) cf. Pieris 1963.

12. During the Depression there was acute unemployment in the legal profession, lawyers being reduced to "loaferdom and hangeronism" in the minor courts, appearing for a couple of rupees or even a packet of cigarettes for schoolboys charged with trifling traffic offences such as riding abreast on bicycles, or without lights after dusk. The leading King's Counsel, H.V. Perera, repeatedly pointed out that, had all Judicial posts such as magistracies been held by professional lawyers, rather than Civil Servants, there would have been little or no unemployment in the profession. The Judicial Services Commission was constituted only after Independence.

13. J.K. Galbraith, *The Liberal Hour* (1960).

II

Occupational choice was often made at the secondary school level, at which stage students made the irrevocable choice between "arts" and "science", the appropriate profession being law or medicine, respectively. These students by-passed the university and enrolled at the professional colleges of law and medicine, manned largely by part-time lecturers. In 1941, the matriculation examination held by London University, which had just replaced the Cambridge Senior examination, comprised three compulsory subjects—English, Latin and and maths, and two options. As one of the "floating" candidates, between "arts" and "science", I opted for history and botany, a choice which had an abiding impact on my future scholarly interests and a vocation, although neither was followed at the university. I matriculated at the beginning of 1941, at the age of sixteen.

The leading secondary schools, considered to be replicative of the English public schools, were really parodies of the latter, based on notions gained from schoolboy fiction, the ideals of widely-read weeklies such as *Gem* and *Magnet* being "bully worship and the cult of violence". The stories they serialized were "fantastically unlike life in a real public school". Readership of these juvenile magazines in England comprised the under-11 age group in the case of the upper classes who had experience of the real situation, but working class interest in this fantasy world continued until 16, and could on occasion be life-long¹⁴. Cerebral and emotive development was petrified at this adolescent stage, resulting in the infantilization of adults. The out come was what has aptly been designated "muscular Christianity".¹⁵ In Ceylon even teachers read this literature. I recall the hysterical rage of a Form II master on discovering that his copies had been stolen. He threatened the whole class with deadly punishment unless restitution was made. The culprit turned out to be a boy in a parallel class. I recount all this because the malleable period of adolescence left an indelible stamp on the personalities of most boys. In adulthood these school-leavers were among those who, the paraphrase John Stuart Mill, subscribed to an ideal of life according to which the normal condition of mankind was that of a ferocious struggle to get on at all costs, the ruthless trampling, crowding, elbowing and internecine conflict, being a necessary fact of life.¹⁶ As a sensitive and introverted child, I detested these dominant values. In my first report, the form master¹⁷ observed, "is shy and retiring", a characterisation which held true throughout my life, since I totally lacked the gift prized by Americans, of being a "joiner".

14. George Orwell, "Boy's Weeklies" in his *Critical Essays*, London, 1946:61,62.

15. cf. Harold Nicholson, *Good Behaviour, Being a Study of Certain Types of Civility*, London, 1968.

16. *Principles of Political Economy*, ed. Donald Winch, London, Penguin, 1970.

17. P.C. Thambugala, a well-known actor in the English comedies popular at the time. He died in 1935, my first year at Royal.

The Ceylon schools supported an authoritarian regime in the class-room where the rod was not spared, idealized "manly" sports such as boxing and rugger, while a disciplined military apprenticeship was provided by the cadet battalion. Many adults have hankering fixation on school life, the joys of cricket,¹⁸ and masochistic adoration of the father-figures of teachers, even if they were responsible for sadistic and humiliating physical chastisement. Concentration on school activity was greater in the case of children ignored, neglected, or maltreated by parents or siblings at home,¹⁹ providing no opportunity for cultivation of their creative sensibilities in civilized avocations²⁰. All too frequently I have witnessed the tragic-comic spectacle of elderly men leading a hollow existence, pitiful spectators of sports they can no longer actively participate in "who have rejoiced only in the transient marvel of their physical strength, (to) discover in later life that their range has become restricted and their interests few"²¹.

McClelland has argued that boys deprived of paternal attention and supervision owing to their father's absence from home for prolonged periods, as in the case of sailors or officials and planters serving in distant colonies, were more achievement oriented than their peers²². I consider this baloney, on a par with the claim for astrological determinism²³. Even if these boys displayed a high need for achievement (n-a), they may be prone to achieve their goals by morally reprehensible and socially dysfunctional means -- dishonesty, fraud, guile, chicane, violence and ruthlessness. In short they may lack integrity, failing to act as autonomous, independent individuals. Their lives are dependent on some real or illusory external power. There is other evidence that

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18. "I am a cricketer", declared the aged President J. R. Jayawardene. At 82, he showed a nostalgic fixation on a game he played well over half a century earlier. He did not contest for a third term as President, as only two innings are allowed in cricket (*Daily News*, 20/11/88:13). Many of our politicians have not developed, intellectually or emotionally after the age of 18, and remain immature adolescents.
 19. Noticing a gash above a boy's eye, Thambugala asked what caused it, and on being told "my father hit (sic) me", commented "your father must be a brute,
 20. This adolescent induction into barbarism is deflected in adulthood to inhuman sado-machostic "ragging" rampant in our universities, the brutality of these rites of passage increasing *pari passu* with the intensity of competition for shrinking job opportunities. With the unprecedented increase terrorism, violence has come to be endemic in Lankan society. The devout Buddhist savant, Dr. E.W. Adikaram, failed in his campaign to ban cadeting in the leading Buddhist school of which he was principal. The ideology of "muscular Christianity" was too pervasive.
 21. Nicholson, *op.cit*: 141. He recommends that Olympic champions should acquire the reading habit while still young. The main pastime of the English composer Sri Arthus Sullivan in his declining years, was gamblin at Monte Carlo. For an incisive and erudite study of the aged, cf. Simone de Beauvoir, *Old Age*, London, 1972. Television has now come as a godsend to the illiterati.
 22. David C. McLelland, *The Achieving Society*, New York, 1961. The near-laboratory case of Kibbutz children in Israel, deprived parental case since infancy, documented by Spiro, Bettelheim and others, has not given rise to significant findings on the effect of parental deprivation on personality
 23. I totally rule out the influence of planets, although belief in astrology is widespread in bourgeois circles in Sri Lanka, and although my pre-school friend Professor Terence Senewiratne and myself, born within minutes of each other, have had remarkably similar life-experiences, even in respect of minor details.

long periods of paternal deprivation intensifies the need for surrogate father-figures such as authoritarian teachers and senior prefects at school, or in adult life charismatic political and religious leaders, a "magic helper"²⁴, or even God and His terrestrial aides such as prophets and priests. Tillich claims that absolute faith in God is the highest point in the transference to an abstract, generalized father-figure. In the larger world the breakdown of the traditional moorings of community, kin and family -- generally "the dissolution of the protective unity of the religiously guided mediaeval culture",²⁵ left the mass of people in a state of acute anxiety, manifested in a feeling of meaninglessness and despair. Other affiliations are sought by the majority of submissive personalities who fear the freedom provided in a regime of democracy and individualism. They constitute the rank and file of mass movements led by charismatic leaders at the national level, or as henchmen of feudalistic bosses at the sub-national level.

The school system was instrumental in producing adults predisposed to uncritical obedience to, even worship of, authority. The reason why I have dwelt at length on this subject is because there is today a proliferation of authoritarian personalities, lacking self respect and individuality, preferring a craven, cringing, and undignified submission to authority. The Nazi concentration camps were used as laboratories to "break in" defiant persons in the most brutal manner. It has been estimated that about 65 per cent of an adult population is "tough minded", politically conservative, upholders of the status quo and institutions such as family, religion and private property, while about half that number belong to the liberal Left, subscribing to "radical" values.²⁶ Sociology has a liberative dimension and for that reason attracts radicals. In America, as Gouldner contends: "sociologists were more liberal than other academics,... they will vote for democratic candidates and civil liberties and against the war in Vietnam... sociology students were in the vanguard of the student revolt".²⁷ This is true for America and Western Europe; elsewhere sociology can stifle radical thought by its practitioners retreating into esoteric conservatism. Their field is not the world of existential reality of *praxis*, but the fantasied worlds of self-contained meaning.

III

To revert to the personal narrative. Entering the autonomous University of Ceylon in 1942, I drifted into economics, one of the few social sciences taught, of which I had more than a nodding acquaintance as it was one of the self-taught subjects I

24. Erich Fromm identified a primordial emotion sublimated in the phenomenon of "falling in love", the love-object being a mystical "magic helper". Immediately after the War, Fromm's *Fear of Freedom*, London, 1942, was eagerly studied by students at LSE as providing a plausible explanation for Fascism. My copy is inscribed "London, 2/8/45", purchased soon after I arrived in England to enrol at LSE.

25. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, Fontana ed, 1972;

26. Knipe and Maclay, *The Dominant Male*, Fontana ed., 1972; J.C. Flugel, *Man. Morals and Society*, London. 1945: 284.

27. Alwin W. Gouldner, *For Sociology*. London. Penguin ed., 1975: 154, 145.

offered for the entrance examination. Asked by an aunt what economics was about. I vaguely said that it had to do with money and banking (my "special subject" for the degree) and she observed that it must be a very important subject. The way it was taught, it wasn't. The dehumanized approach of the 'forties left out what was really important in the older political economy. The syllabi were evolved in the context of the Depression of the 'thirties, when unemployment and poverty were widespread, and economics emerged as a "dismal science", preoccupied with the satisfaction of "basic needs" in a regime of acute scarcity. For the individual there was absolutely no scope for discretionary spending on the theater, film or books, and the average worker was an unmitigated philistine. At the macro-level, government policy was geared to retrenchment and minimization of state expenditure. Our introductory textbook, *The Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (1934) by Lionel Robbins only contributed to underline the insignificance of the "dismal science", its major premise being the scarcity of resources, and the objective of economic policy the careful and cheeseparing allocation of these resources between competing and unlimited wants. In Benham's widely used textbook on economics the allocation of expendable income between rum and cigarettes was carefully examined and illustrated through Patrelean 'indifference curves'. Economics was "Pegged" to a stage in Pareto's own intellectual development embodied in his treatises on mathematical economics, which took rational behaviour for granted, whereas unreason was dominant in the real world. The analysis of non-logical conduct comprised a far wider range of fact than the rational component analysed by the economist who, "with a little imagination, a pen and a few reams of paper can relieve himself of a chat on economic "principles". Late in life Pareto turned sociologist and in his voluminous treatise on general sociology undertook what he called, the "long and fatiguing task" of accumulating facts to demonstrate the supremacy of unreason in human affairs.²⁸

There was no provision for sociology at the university, and consequently hardly any books on the subject in the library. Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* was a prominent exception, being published in a series on philosophy (in England I attended Mannheim's lectures, and came to know a translator of his work, Edward Shils). The Colombo Public Library served us better. I recall Lenin's *Selected Works* some books by Freud, including his *Introductory Lectures*, and a bound volume of the *Sociological Review*. The spare cash that impecunious undergraduates could muster was spent on tea and cigarettes, but a few of us spent all we had on books dealing with subjects outside the very limited horizons of the university curriculum. The International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction had just been founded and edited by Karl Mannheim and some early books published in the series found their way to the Colombo bookshops. My copy of *Frustration and Aggression* by John Dollard *et al* is dated 18/9/44. As a subscriber to the Left Book Club, I received their publications.

28. Vilfredo Pareto, *Trattato di Sociologia Generale*. (1913) English Trans. *The Mind and Society*, London, 4 vols 1935.

My choice of Banking as "special subject" for the economics degree only served to underline the vacuity of the "social" science we were taught. The inquiring student concerned with understanding existential reality had to go outside the rarefied atmosphere of the lecture room. He was invariably inducted into the polemics of doctrinaire Marxism -- of the genre which made Marx exclaim "thank God, I am not a Marxist" - and attracted by the conspiratorial approach of the cadre parties of the Left, especially the Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party which had an added attractiveness because it was proscribed by the colonial government during the war. Suffering from what Lenin called "the infantile disorder" of "left-wing Communism" he was exposed to a "bookish kind of Marxism"²⁹, which imparted little understanding of the corpus of Marx's own theoretical writing, particularly its sociological component. Marxian economics was studied as an autonomous domain, separate even from his political tracts. There was a schizophrenic dualism characteristic of left-oriented economists who lectured on classical economics in the university and an over-simplified Marxian economics to workers outside the campus. There was no analysis of Marxian social science as an organic whole. Studies of Marxian economics were not lacking.³⁰ The first English translation of *Capital* was published in 1887. Keynes dismissed it as an "obsolete textbook on economics" in 1925,³¹ but he was to change his attitude a decade later. The post-war discovery of hitherto unpublished works, particularly the so called Paris manuscripts of 1844 and the *Grundrisse* in the very late 'fifties and early 'sixties,³² led to new perspectives. Sociologists were able to make a more balanced assessment of Marxian social science, particularly the important concept of alienation which came to light in the newly discovered writings.³³ Needless to say, Lenin was unaware of these writings. A neglected war-time publication, Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*³⁴, treated Marx's multifaceted roles as prophet, sociologist, economist and teacher, separately. Schumpeter warned of the pitfalls of synthesis

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29. cf. Hector Abhayavardhana, "Categories of Left Thinking in Ceylon." *Community*. No.4 1962 for a critical account of Marxist thought in Colonial times.
30. These range from A.D. Lindsay's *Karl Marx's Capital*, Oxford, 1925 to Joan Robinson's *Essay on Marxian Economics*, Cambridge, 1947.
31. Keynes. "A Short View of Russia." (1925) in his *Essays in Persuasion*, London: 1933: 300. A more favourable assessment of Marx is found in his *General Theory* (1935).
32. Marx. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Moscow. Progress Publ. 1977, McClellan's English translation of the *Grundrisse* appeared in 1971; Martin Nicholaus's Pelican ed. in 1973. In my analysis of Society and Ideology in Ceylon 1975-1850, published in 1951/2 I used Marx's *Capital*. In my lectures on social class I used the *Communist Manifesto*, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany*, and the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. It was only after I had seen the Paris MSS that I wrote an article on the Alienation of the Modern Intellectual (1962).
33. Of the very extensive post-war literature, mention may be made of Erich Fromm. *Marx's Concept of Man*, New York, 1961; Henri le Febvre. *The Sociology of Marx*, Penguin ed., 1968; Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, Cambridge. 1968; Bertell Ollman. *Marx's Theory of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge, 1971; Istvan Meszaros. *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, Merlin Press, 1970; David McClellan. *Marx Before Marxism*, Pelican ed., 1972.
34. London, 1943, The chapter on the civilization of capitalism is based on the *Communist Manifesto*.

Synthesis in general, i.e., coordination of methods and results of different lines of advance, is a difficult thing which few are competent to tackle. In consequence it is ordinarily not tackled at all and from the students who are taught only to see individual trees we hear discontented clamour for the forest. They fail to realize however that the trouble is in part an *embarass de richesse* and that the synthetic forest may be uncommonly like an intellectual concentration camp.

Synthesis on Marxian lines, i.e., coordination of economic and sociological analysis with a view to bending everything to a single purpose, is of course particularly apt to look like that. The purpose -- that *histoire raisonnee* of capitalist society-- is wide enough but the analytic set up is not.³⁵

Our prescribed textbooks were based on an inarticulate major premiss of puritanical values such as thrift and austerity. One effect of the global inter-war depression was that it created an almost universal belief that suppression or postponement of gratification of sensate desire was the bedrock of capitalist economic growth. This ideology was widespread and pervasive, and long predated the Depression. Mandeville, writing in 1713, attributed the dominant ideal of renunciation of mundane pleasure to the silliness of man:

So silly a creature is man, as that, intoxicated with the fumes of vanity, he can feast on the thoughts of the praises that shall be paid his memory in future ages with so much ecstasy, as to neglect his present life.³⁶

More than a century later, Marx probed the mentality of the puritanical capitalist, especially his fetishization of money, which led to deferred consumption and inhibition of creativity and spontaneous self-expression:

The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre or balls, or to the public house, and the less you think, love, theorize, sing paint, fence, etc. the more you will be able to save and the greater will become your treasure which neither moth or rust will corrupt -- your capital. The less you are, the less you express your life, the more you have, the greater is your alienated life.³⁷

While the masses were compelled to accept world-renouncing philosophies as matter of necessity, the aristocracy who could afford better life-styles, voluntarily accepted ascetic values. Bertrand Russell says that throughout his youth he was treated in a very Spartan manner;³⁸ in respect of food, almost to an extent incompatible with good health. Dietary restrictions were partly due to nutritional ignorance (vitamins had not

35. Schumpeter's denunciation of the excesses of synthesis recoiled on him. T.S. Ashton in his lectures at LSE in 1945, ridiculed Schumpeter's attribution, *inter alia* to the art of da Vinci, Michelangelo, El Greco, Cezanne, Matiss and Picasso to capitalist civilization.

36. Mandeville. *Fable of the Bees* (1713) ed. Phillip Barth, Penguin, 1970: 226.

37. Marx, *Early Writings*.

38. Of the Spartan life" Mandeville had this to say *op.cit.*, 254?: "... their discipline was so rigid and their manner of living so austere and so void of akk comfort, that the most temperate man among us would refuse to submit to the harshness of such uncouth laws".

yet been discovered). Fruits were considered bad for children. As a boy he suffered gnawing pangs of guilt when his governess discovered that he had secretly eaten blackberries. His denial of having partaken of the forbidden fruit, was his first lie. Shame overwhelmed him when the tell-tale stains were found on his tongue. The most vivid of his early memories were such humiliations which made him unusually prone to a sense of sin.³⁹

After the attainment of Independence in 1948, the newly elected government of the erstwhile colony of Ceylon, was confronted with the formidable task of reconstructing a stagnant economy which had barely emerged from the Great Depression, with its legacy of widespread unemployment and unrelieved poverty. Social and economic policy had been oriented to a drastic reduction of state expenditure, to which there was retrenchment of government employees and pruning of investment in all sectors, including the welfare services. An ethic of thrift, parsimony and austerity called for in this context, inculcated in its subjects by the colonial administration, would have fallen on the deaf ears of impoverished, debt-ridden workers and peasants, had it not been for countervailing religious values which had a convenient salience. Ambient puritanical values, enshrined in the Protestant Ethic in Western Europe and New England, had remarkable parallels in Therevada Buddhism, strikingly so during the Tokugawa period in Japan where this-worldly asceticism gained favour at the expense of the hedonistic, extrovert Mahayana.⁴⁰ In Ceylon the Y.M.B.A. was but a parody of the holier-than-thou Y.M.C.A., the latter excluding the more extroverted Roman Catholic fraternity. Both Protestant Christian and Therevada Buddhist agreed without demur to "scorn delights and live laborious days".

IV

The only writer in mainstream economics to influence me was Keynes, who launched a frontal attack on the "dismal science" of classical economics, spearheading a more humanistic discipline which drew on heretics like Mandeville (whose *Fable of the Bees* was convicted by the Grand Jury of Middlesex of being a nuisance), Malthus, Marx and, above all, J.A. Hobson. Keynes's tract, *The Means to Prosperity* (1733) contained embryonic ideas enunciated in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1935) which deeply influenced me in my late 'teens.' After a more systematic study of sociology, I took up the *General Theory* again, and found that many of its suppositions were based on an *ad hoc* sociology and psychology, inapplicable to countries outside the ambit of Euro-American behavioural patterns. Generally.

39. Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography*, 3 vols. London, 1951. American ed. I: 35-37.

40. cf. especially Robert N. Bellah. *Tokugawa Religion*, Glencoe, 1957; Ralph Pieris 1969. ch IX/3. C.G. Seligman attempted to apply Jung's introvert-extrovert typology nations or "races" (*Anthropology and Psychology. J. Royal Anthropol. Inst.* 1924). Hocart contends that their application is opposite not so much to groups but to phases, and applies them to two major phases during which Therevada and Mahayana were dominant respectively in ancient Ceylon (A.M. Hocart. *Decadence in India*, in *Essays Presented to C.G. Seligman* ed. E.E. Evans Pritchard *et.al.* London, 1934.

The subjective factors, which we shall consider in more detail in the next Chapter (consisting) of 6 pages with only a cursory analysis of these factors). Include those psychological characteristics of *human nature* and those social practices and institutions which, though not unalterable, are unlikely to undergo a material change except in abnormal or revolutionary circumstances. In an historical enquiry or in comparing one social system with another of a different type, it is necessary to take account of the manner in which changes in the subjective factors may affect the propensity to consume.⁴¹

Keynes claims that a fundamental psychological law could be derived with great confidence, "*a priori* from our knowledge of *human nature* and the detailed facts of experience... that men are disposed, *as a rule on the average*, to increase their consumption as their income increases, but not by as much as the increase in their income".⁴² His objection to the classical view was that it was not based on typical dispositions, the average, but rather based state policy on a "semblance of prudent financiers" acting on maxims calculated to "enrich" individuals by accumulating claims to future enjoyment through savings.⁴³ In contrast, Keynes was analysing the determinants of economic action in the context of western values, institutions, etc. based for instance on the commonsense observation that some part of increases in income is saved, which he elevated to a "fundamental psychological rule of any *modern community*".⁴⁴

Practically the whole corpus of Keynesian economic philosophy hinged on the central concept of the propensity to consume, its antecedents, consequences, and policy implications. "Consumption -- to repeat the obvious -- is the sole end and object of all economic activity".⁴⁵ This should not be obstructed. Being part of *human nature*, it cannot be transmitted, but can be managed.⁴⁶ In fact, "in contemporary conditions the growth of wealth, so far from being dependent on the abstinence of the rich, as is commonly supposed, is more likely to be impeded by it".⁴⁷ On the other hand, if excessive hedonism is allowed free play, "when the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of a casino, the job is likely to be ill done".⁴⁸ The conclusion is that state policy should exercise a guiding influence on the propensity to consume,

41. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, London, 1935:91. My italics.

42. *op. cit.*: 96. My italics.

43. *ibid.*: 131.

44. *ibid.*: 97. My italics.

45. *ibid.*: 104. Keynes encouraged empirical research on Consumption patterns.

46. *ibid.*: 374. My italics.

47. *ibid.*: 373.

48. *ibid.*: 159.

and this entails enlarged government functions, judiciously balancing the propensity to consume and the inducement to invest. This would seem to adherents of *laissez faire*, the demise of which Keynes foresaw two decades previously,⁴⁹ "to be a terrific encroachment on individualism", but was defended by him. Liberalism was the best guarantee of personal liberty, although the appeal to self interest may on occasion have gone too far. But excessive control of personal choice leads to homogeneous or totalitarian states.⁵⁰

Moreover, dangerous human proclivity can be channelled into comparatively harmless channels by the existence of opportunities for money-making and private wealth, which, if they cannot be satisfied in this way, may find their outlet in cruelty, the reckless pursuit of personal power and authority, and other forms of self-aggrandizement. It is better that a man should tyrannize over his bank balance than over his fellow-citizens; and while the former is sometimes denounced as being but a means to the latter, sometimes at least it is an alternative.⁵¹

It is important that the Keynesian analysis was based on economic motivations supposedly dominant in "modern communities". In the Third World however, and increasingly in advanced urban-industrial countries, if the enhancement of income involves too much drudgery, or gives rise to too much boredom, many have been found to be disinclined to work overtime. With social insurance providing adequate security, increasing income is sought by the rich for expensive and risky leisure activities such as golf, mountaineering, foreign travel, etc. These patterns of behaviour cast doubt on the validity of the Keynesian "psychological suppositions". He did not probe the "subjective factors" in comparative perspective. In poor countries unsatisfied basic needs are such that increases in real income have to be expended in satisfying pent-up demand for wage-goods, if indeed there is any cash left after debt redemption. Invariably the worker cannot make ends meet, and leaves ends unmet, a mode of domestic deficit-financing which progressively immiserates him on account of debt-servicing. Finally, although Keynes repeatedly referred to religion it was postulated as an unanalysed general concept, without so much as a passing reference to the sociological literature linking religion to economic activity particularly the work of Tawney, Max Weber and Sombart.⁵²

The economics we were taught, supposedly analysing the capitalist order (no attention was paid to the centrally planned economies) turned out to be a negation of the historic mission of capitalism which was to provide the material substructure for

49. Keynes, "The End of Laissez-faire" (1926), in his *Essays in Persuasion*. London, 1933. Here he affirmed the notion, repeated in the *General Theory*, that "most men today reject ascetic notions and do not doubt the real advantages of wealth".

50. Keynes, *General Theory*: 380.

51. *ibid*: 374.

52. As a bibliophile, it is a moot point whether Keynes deliberately ignored this literature. C.R. Fay's *English Economic History, mainly since 1700*, Cambridge, 1941, has a chapter on capitalism and the Weber-Tawney debate. The author became aware of Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* through references to it in Tawney's *Religion and the Capitalism*, which first appeared in 1922. Keynes has a breezy review of Fay's book in the *Economic Journal*.

western civilization which apart from promoting conspicuous construction of gigantic multi-storey buildings, fostered the great achievements of the bourgeoisie in the fine arts, literature and science. The cultural superstructure of capitalism could hardly have been possible on the basis of the values of thrift, parsimony, frugality and asceticism associated with the Protestant Ethic. Even music came under the watchful vigilance of the English Puritans.⁵³ It was this Weberian capitalism, founder on this-worldly asceticism, that was dominant in the inter-war years. It contrasted sharply with what Weber, with characteristically Gentile disdain, labelled Jewish parish capitalism, wild-cat capitalism, which accommodated speculative enterprise, usury, etc. In the extreme case there was no restraint on the speculation of "robber barons" who, in their greed for gain, resorted to violence, even murder of their business rivals. This was the case in Ceylon prior to the allocation of route licences road transport; omnibus magnates hired murderous thugs in their fierce competition with rival operators.

Sombart, writing in 1913, claimed that luxury could effectively promote capitalist development. Nations could live in splendour only if a modicum of luxury and prodigality replaced, or co-existed with, parsimony,⁵⁴ for as Mendeville declared in the last lines of his *Fable of the Bees*, written two centuries earlier;

Bare virtue can't make nations live
In splendour; they, that would revive
A Golden Age, must be as free,
For Acorns as for Honesty.

The multiplier effect of state and private expenditure, to a far greater extent than primitive accumulation or sterile savings, was the basis of bourgeoisie cultural superstructures, which Marx and Engels conceded in the *Communist Manifesto*: Gothic cathedrals, aqueducts, bridges and roadways, street lighting, museums, concert halls, theatres etc. In 1945 Keynes foresaw that "the day is not far off when the Economic problem will take the back seat where it belongs, and the arena of the heart and the head will be occupied or re-occupied, by our real problems, -- problems of life and of human relations, of creation and behaviour and religion". These areas, outside the ambit of economics, are among the dominant concerns of sociology. They include deeply felt personal experiences, including the celebration of festivals and holidays.⁵⁵ These non-economic phenomena have to be "manipulated in terms of a body of theory which is not economic but over a wide area of the field, sociological".⁵⁶ The need to understand and

53. Percy A. Scholes, *The Puritans and Music*, London, 1924.

54. Werner Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism* (1913) Trans, Philip Siegelman, University of Michigan Press, 1967.

55. A trivial but revealing episode may be mentioned here. The Governor of the Central Bank, asked by a newspaper to comment on Christmas day last year, said, what could he say, as an economist, and suggested that the reporter go to "a sociologist, or someone".

56. T.H. Marshall, *Sociology at the Crossroads*, London, 1963: 7.

analyse these complex problem-areas -- to which we must add dissent, violence, mental illness, and terrorism -- provided one of the pre-conditions for the emergence of sociology itself. Traditionalism having lost its dominance, the establishment of sociology was contingent on "a veritable faith in the power of reason to dare to undertake the translation of the most complex and unstable of realities into definite terms".⁵⁷

Thus through peripheral entry points I stumbled into my life-long vocation of sociologist. Since the subject was not taught at the University of Ceylon when I graduated in 1945, and I was under-age for the Civil Service examination, I prevailed on my parents to send me to the London School of Economics (LSE) the only institution in England teaching sociology, and that as part of the economics degree. I was sent abroad on the understanding that my university studies were only incidental to my qualifying as a lawyer. I enrolled at the Middle Temple, passed the first part of the Bar examination, besides completing the economics degree with sociology as special subject. I was then informed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies at LSE that I would not be permitted to work for the Ph.D while studying for the final Bar examination which I was regretfully compelled to postpone *sine die*. After the viva for the doctorate at the end of 1949 (the examiners were my supervisor T.H. Marshall and S.H. Frankel from Oxford. The latter took a great interest in my subsequent work and remembered my dissertation when I visited him fifteen years later.) The Ph.D. was conferred on me early in 1950.

Both Robbins and Benham whose books were required reading at home were lecturing at LSE in the year I joined (1945). The experience of the War compelled them to discard the outdated conceptual apparatus of their pre-war writing. Both floundered in trying to bring their lectures closer to reality. In the outcome their "applied economics" was at the level of the anecdotal reportage in the popular press. Robbins advised the wartime government of Britain. One incident he related of a Minister asking him for a rule-of-thumb solution to some economic problem, which he confessed was impossible. He later attained eminence as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Higher Education was elevated to the peerage and was a respected senior citizen. Benham had been advisor to the Government of Jamaica where he learnt, to his chagrin, that it was not economic laws that determined wages, but the whims of the charismatic trade union leader, later Prime Minister, Alexander Bustumante, whose egotism the British advisor saw in the closing words of his public speeches: "God save the Queen, And God save me!". The aridity and irrelevance of the economics lectures at LSE by Benham, Hayek, Kaldor and Robbins was not due to their ineptitude as theorists, but rather owing to the self-imposed limitations of the discipline itself, resulting from the zealous yearning to make it an abstract "science", distinct from the humanities. Econometrics was its apotheosis. The contrast between (say) Hayek's *Pure Theory of Capital* and his popular approach to totalitarianism, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) was striking.

57. Durkheim. Sociology. in H.K. Wolff ed., *Emile Durkheim 1858-1917*, Ohio State University Press, 1960: 385

The lectures on economic history by H.L. Beales and T.S. Ashton (both authorities on the Industrial Revolution) were stimulating, but R.H. Tawney did not show the erudition and perceptiveness of his written work in his lectures. Psychology was a subject for the degree. But it was Harold J. Laski who was the draw. A prolific writer and entertaining lecturer, he was unaccountably forgotten after his death. I attended public lectures by Bertrand Russell, whom I greatly admired, and was present at the inauguration of the World Socialist Movement by G.D.H. Cole.

A.N. Whitehead has rightly said that a science that hesitates to forget its founders is lost. The development of sociology at LSE was hampered largely by the dedicated reverence for the work of L.T. Hobhouse, the first Martin White Professor, particularly by Morris Ginsberg, who succeeded him to the chair. The mental climate of the Indian summer of intellectual complacency which marked the Victorian era is well exemplified in the work of Hobhouse. H.G. Wells has written so perspicaciously of the British mind "stagnating in contentment" at that time, that he may be quoted in extenso. In the years before 1933, despite the contentment of the first World War, there was an easy-going indifference to fundamental social questions:

In the relatively tranquil past people got along with a minimum of critical thought about existence. From the palace to the slum, people had their "way of life" and were not, and did not want to be, dislodged from its limitations. They wanted more of the same stuff, a little enhanced. They had their religions and codes and loyalties and so forth, but these were held without fierceness, uncharitably perhaps but not intolerantly, background of unchallengeable assurance to the general daily life. They did not talk about them because they were completely convinced. At some gatherings religious and political discussions were taboo. They disturbed the decencies of life... large numbers of people, "comfortable people"... could banish from their minds with very little effort the thought that there could still be quasidiabolical cruelty, intense torture and degrading fear on earth. It seemed to be a minority tragedy... all healthy, hearty, unthreatened people ... refused most gallantly to be depressed or to notice any groans from the low creatures outside the trickle of blood under the door.⁵⁸

Morris Ginsberg was extremely reluctant to deviate from Hobhouse's approach, claiming that *Morals in Evolution* (orig. 1906) was "a treatise not only on morals, but also on comparative sociology". There was an aura of unreality in the book co-authored by Hobhouse, Wheeler and Ginsberg on *The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples* (1915). Throughout these works there is an underlying belief in the progress of man from an "uncivilized" to a "civilized" state, reflecting the Mediaeval dichotomy of man into Christian and Heathen. "The earlier civilizations",

58. H.G. Wells, pp. '42 and '44 *A Contemporary Memoir Upon Human Behaviour During the Crisis of the World Revolution.*, London, 1944. According to the author's Preface this was deliberately published as an exclusive library edition. "There will be no cheaper edition issued at any time and I doubt if secondhand copies will ever be abundant. It is an esoteric work, "all that I have made of things, my ultimate philosophy, copious and complete". It includes his dissertation for the D.Sc. of London University. My copy, dated 30/8/44 cost 36 rupees at Cave's, a great sum of money in those days

wrote Ginsberg, "were mere islands in the sea of barbarism and were liable to constant submersion".⁵⁹ Hobhouse was led to the optimistic conclusion that although human progress was not automatic or inevitable, "the humanitarian spirit", somewhat shaken since 1870, would eventually re-assert itself. Social development was in four stages -- from per-literate societies to the modern world, beginning in the 16th century. He anticipated that moral evolution would result in the elimination of conflict and war, the emergence of peaceful communities united in a world polity, elements of which he discerned in 1924, perhaps in the League of Nations. The criteria for this evolution he identified in the fields of law and justice, marriage and morals, property etc. Marriage among "uncivilized" peoples, was a loose tie progressing to the "civilized" position of an institution not founded on a magical sacrament, but as the most sacred of human relationships. Hobhouse's work was a complacent apologia for the status quo; an easy-going optimism, temporarily shaken by the first World War which was considered a transient breakdown in the relentless advance of the rational good. Ginsberg thought that Hobhouse's *Social Development* (1924) should be the basic text for undergraduate instruction in 1945, but the students thought otherwise.⁶⁰

The difficulty was the absence of a clearly defined subject matter for sociology. The leading sociologists in England came from other disciplines, Ginsberg and W.J.H. Sprott (who introduced the subject at Nottingham University) were philosophers; T.H. Marshall came from economic history and David Glass from demography.⁶¹ I was present at Marshall's inaugural lecture in 1945 which dealt sensitively with the problems facing the sociologist at a time when the subject was at the crossroads.⁶² Four years later, in his inaugural lecture David Glass observed that the universities were not the best tying-in homes for new subjects.⁶³ Edward Shils often told me that sociology was not a suitable subject for university instruction; it was meant for reflection on the human condition by mature intellectuals. The component of personal knowledge was greater than in any of the other social sciences. The crux was the demarcation of the field itself. As Ortega Y Gasset said, it was remarkable that none of the eminent sociologists whose work he consulted defined what "society" or the "social" was. Among the many concepts proposed to encompass the complex data of sociology, Ortega suggests "fields of concerns and importance"; spatially organized, they are "pragmatic regions," ambits constituted by dynamic relations.⁶⁴ Some significant pragmatic regions have been analysed by Ortega (love), Max Scheler (sympathy) Simmel (friendship, conflict), Radcliffe-Brown and others (kinship). Besides there are more or less structured units such as small groups and cliques, communities etc. Yet the subject matter of sociology remains amorphous. In his Presidential Address to the fifth World Congress of Sociology, Professor T.H. Marshall said:

59. Ginsberg. Introduction to the 1950 ed. xiv.

60. E.A. Shils, our undergraduate tutor, told me in private that he was under pressure to adopt *Social Development* as a textbook.

61. Later Karl Polyani shifted from chemistry to sociology at Manchester University.

62. T.H. Marshall, *Sociology at the Crossroads*, London, 1965.

63. D.V. Glass, *The Application of Social Research*, *British J. Sociology*, I. 1950.

64. Ortega Y Gasset, *Man and people*, New York, 1957.

Is there a central body of sociological theory in which sociologists in general find inspiration, guidance, and the instruments of scientific analysis to the same extent that economists found these things in economic theory? I think not. And I mention this point only as a warning against false complacency⁶⁵.

Sociology belongs to the humanities, and is not an exact science in any sense of the word.

VI

In 1951 I was appointed assistant lecturer at the University of Ceylon in the face of peevish opposition by the American Professor who headed the Department of sociology, who told me that he had no interest in history or theory, having studied at a "cow college" (Texas). His main preoccupation was securing funds for data collection by students, through formal questionnaires. I had no wish to be drawn into this naive empiricism, nor did I have any research funding, in common with scholars in most underdeveloped countries whose travails I have described elsewhere.⁶⁶ Not being a "joiner" by temperament, I recoiled from the idea of spending a couple of years on field work in an isolated village. In fact I could not even spare the five months that Edmund Leach (assisted by an interpreter) spent to study a village in the North Central Dry Zone.⁶⁷ As head of the Department of Sociology, a multitude of administrative duties, besides teaching, devolved on me. Nor did I endorse the view that such an initiatory period was necessary for true "understanding", or that generalization was possible from the single case, however typical it may have been.

Complete isolation of a peripheral community is a myth. Even traditionally the sovereignty of the monarch was acknowledged by periodical payments of tax or tribute through provincial governors. Links with the established Church however were tenuous, and local folk-priests of liciated on ceremonial occasions while local and Hindu deities such as Pulleyar,⁶⁸ were propitiated. At the time of Leach's fieldwork the reach of the centre had been strengthened by the Buddhist revival, and a temple constructed for a resident monk. The desire to visit the sixteen places of pilgrimage, particularly the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Kataragama, and Adam's Peak, created an important link with the Centre⁶⁹. The cash-nexus all but destroyed the traditional system of labour exchange. Above all monetization had proceeded apace and in the present century there was an unprecedented expansion of government activity, intruding into every

65. *Trans. Fifth World Congress of Sociology* (1964).

66. Ralph Pieris. 1964.

67. *Pul Eliya: a Village in Ceylon*. Cambridge University Press, 1961.

68. E.R. Leach, "Pulleyar and the Lord Buddha: An Aspect of Religious Syncretism" in *Ceylon, Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Rev.*, 49/ii. 1965.

69. Of Paul Wirtz, *Kataragama, The Holiest place in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1966; Gananath Obeyesekera, "Social Change and the Deities. The Rise of the Kataragama Cult in Modern Sri Lanka." *Man*, 12. 1977; and "The Firewalkers of Kataragama. The Rise of Bhakti Religiosity in Buddhist Sri Lanka." *J. Asian Studies*, 37/iii. 1978; Donald K. Swearer. "The Kataragama and Kandy Asela Periharas.: Juxtaposing Religious Elements in Sri Lanka," in Welbom and Yocum, *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*, Lucknow, Manohar, 1982.

aspect of village life. A whole stratum of entrepreneurial *mudalalis* (lit. "profit-maximisers") emerged. Usually hailing from the low country, the boutique keeper-cum-usurer was often lay warden (*dayakaya*) of the local temple, He organized pilgrimages, masking his avarice behind ostensible religiosity, so much so that he could request the intervention of the monk to exert pressure on impecunious peasants to settle their debts.

Further linkages with the Centre were established more recently through new modes of communication -- newspapers, radio, and now television. While vices such as alcoholism and crime penetrated into the interior, there was also an acceptance of puritainal values, which placed a premium on sobriety and behavioural restraint, especially in respect of marriage and morals. Among the bourgeoisie recently introduced "customs" came to be regarded as revered traditions of remote antiquity. The loose marriage tie was replaced by a moral code which placed a high value on virginity, although the "custom" for a newly-wed couple to show the blood-stained nocturnal bed linen was obviously a result of Dutch and British Puritanism. The fact villagers slept on mats spread on the floor and used no linen is testimony to the fact that the custom was confined to the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie imitators. Even the jungle tribes were affected by these changes. As recently as 1910 when the Seligman were trailing the fast-disappearing "wild" Veddas, villagers in the vicinity appeared at the resthouses occupied by foreigners in the role of "professional primitive man" for a pecuniary consideration to be photographed in the scatty garb of the primitives carrying bows and arrows, "whereas, when not on show, they dress very much as the neighbouring peasant Sinhalese", having adopted many Sinhalese practices, including settled cultivation.⁷⁰

My forays into historical data were viewed with suspicion and even hostility by the expatriate sociologists, and were incomprehensible to the local historians. One of the latter was editor of the *University of Ceylon Review* and insisted on an explanation of the sociological approach in my earliest articles; hence the irrelevant introductory paragraphs in the first of three articles of 1951/2. However I defiantly proceeded with the sociological interpretation of historical data, working intermittently at the National Archives and the Colombo Museum Library. My objective was to reconstruct the structure and organization of Sinhala society in a "slice of time", namely the Kandyan Period. My approach led Louis Dumont, the eminent French anthropologist to describe me as "the historical sociologist".⁷¹ In his *Homo Hierarchicus*, Dumont refers to my *Sinhalese Social Organization* as "an extremely fully worked out 'liturgy' centred on the king, and markedly bureaucratic in nature, at first sight different from the Indian system as we know it today. It is known that there are only a very few Brahmans, temple priests, among the Sinhalese... Buddhism is predominant".⁷² A hundred years after the famous dispute, the *Methodenstreit*, on whether or not the historian should admit theoretical considerations or deal in generalizations, the issue has not been settled. Redcliffe Brown avers:

70. C.G. & B.Z. Seligman. *The Vaddas*, Cambridge, 1911.

71. Louis Dumont, "Marriage in India, The Present State of the Question," *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, V, October, 1961: 90.

72. Louis Dumont. *Homo Hierarchicus*, London. Penguin 1970.; Pieris, 1951/2; also in my doctoral dissertation, *The Sociological Consequences of Imperialism, with Special Reference to Ceylon*, London University, 1949; and Pieris. 1956.

Certainly there are writings by historians which are to be valued not solely as ideographic accounts of the facts of the past but as containing theoretical (nomothetic) interpretations of those facts. The tradition in French historical studies of Fustel de Coulanges and his followers, such as Gustave Glotz, illustrates this kind of combination. Some modern writers refer to it as sociological history or historical sociology.⁷³

I had invoked the authority of Fustel de Coulanges who was fond of repeating the fact that sociology is history which, according to Durkheim, is incontestable provided that history is carried on sociologically:

Is not the only means sociologists have to attain this result to go spontaneously to history; get in touch with it, show it what role the materials it accumulates can play, become permeated with its spirit, and permeate it with the spirit of sociology?⁷⁴

Mine was a synchronic analysis intended to provide a baseline for a study of subsequent changes. A preliminary diachronic analysis was attempted in three earlier articles which appeared in 1951/2 entitled "Society and Ideology in Ceylon During a "Time of Troubles", 1795-1850," the broad outlines of the take-off point being conceptualized as "Traditional Ceylon".

One cannot analyse change in the abstract. It is a process. It has to be a transmogrification, partial or total, from one position or state to another. Such an analysis is diachronic. The two points selected for comparison are analagous to two 'stills' from a moving film. Although "Traditional Ceylon" centred on the early nineteenth century, the time-span was much longer and therefore not a fixed social structure. There were for instance changes in the caste system, the king exercising his authority to degrade certain castes, to incorporate new immigrant groups, or assign a new function to an existing caste, resulting in ambiguities in the position of certain "low castes" in the caste hierarchy. Although Whitehead's dictum that "it is the large generalization limited by the happy particularity that is the fruitful conception",⁷⁵ is incontestable, it has its pitfalls. Analysts on occasion, knowingly or unconsciously, select only those particulars which "prove" the generalization. Thus the supposed amity between Muslim and Sinhala communities in Kandyan times is "proved" by land grants made by the monarch for the construction of mosques. But we must differentiate a complex relationship. Sinhala and Muslim may have worked together in each other's paddy fields and may have engaged in economic transactions, but their relations did not extend to commensality, while intermarriage was strictly taboo.

73. A.R. Radcliffe - Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, London, 1952: 2.

74. Durkheim, Preface to *L'Année Sociologique*, Vol. I, 1896/7, in *Emile Durkheim*, ed. Kurt Wolff, Ohio University Press.

75. A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge, 1933.

Malinowski suggested that field experience and "scrutiny of the really important manifestations of organized human behaviour" demonstrated, inter alia, the maxim that culture "is an integral in which the various elements are interdependent", and that "the cultural process, looked at any of its concrete manifestations, always involves human beings who *stand in definite relations to each other*".⁷⁶ These generalized axioms fail to differentiate types or degrees of integration. Neither society nor culture constitute mechanistic integrals. The relations of parts to wholes are not uniform; the totality can add up to something more than the constituent parts. Durkheim made this clear in his analysis of professional organizations. The individual members, carried along by the current of their similar interests, constitute a closed group, with identifiable features, within the larger society, evolving a moral life of its own.⁷⁷ Hence Durkheim's conception of the "collective consciousness", and "collective representations". Despite the myths, the etymological and historical distortions, there is no doubt that people constituting a nation are drawn into a collectivity which is more than the sum total of the individuals forming it, because a collective consciousness, a moral life, which was not of their conscious making, collectively or severally, comes into being. Professor Morris Ginsberg, in his lectures, having demolished the myths pertaining to "national character", still concluded, almost as an aside, that "there is something in it."

In any society there are inexplicable "survivals"; customs and superstitions persist for sentimental or emotional reasons, and are hard to eradicate. In folk religion their preservation is ensured by the belief that strictest adherence to liturgical detail is necessary for the success of a ritual -- a *mantra* has to be repeated word-perfect, without the slightest deviation from the received texts or oral liturgy. The pre-literate folk priest therefore had to have an extraordinary memory (until their theologians, the anthropologists, recorded these texts.)⁷⁸ Or there may be a selective conservatism by which revivalists pick out elements from a cultural complex which they scrupulously preserve, even if it results in an incongruous "contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous." I later analysed the "lag" resulting from survivals of elements from one or more of the dimensions, society, personality, and culture (Pieris. 1969).⁷⁹ There may be an untidy juxta position of elements of a heterogeneous complex, held together by the actor's construction of social reality.

76. B. Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, University of Carolina Press, 1944: 150. *My italics*.

77. Durkheim. *Professions Ethics and Civic Morals*, London.

78. Radcliffe Brown, *op.cit.*, 194-195.

79. Founded by Dr. S. Arasaratnam and myself who were co-editors, and Ian Goonetilleke, Managing Editor. Without our knowledge the Journal continues to be published in a new series. Ralp Pieris. 1960.

VII

This is the appropriate point to reconsider the important question of the investigator's involvement in the society he analyses. Can we prescribe the degree of intimacy with his subjects required of the sociologist? There are two apparently contradictory viewpoints, one asserting the superiority of the insider's understanding of his own society, the other advocating the detached judgment of the outsider studying societies other than his own. In respect of Ceylon the former position was taken by the English archaeologist, John Still:

Not until some instructed man goes and lives among them will the jungle villagers who are not Veddhas yield their treasure of unconsciously stored knowledge; and for a man who is at the mercy of an interpreter, it is a fruitless quest. I hope when it is done it will be by a Sinhalese trained in anthropology.⁸⁰

The insider approach making total involvement the ideal, if taken to its logical conclusion, means that 'only the individual actor can experience the realities of his own society, especially if the stress is on the personal, the intimate, the sensory. From this individualistic standpoint it is only a step further to the philosophical red-herring of the headache that is personal to him who suffers it. Gilbert Ryle takes the argument to its logical conclusion when he says that "you cannot hold my catches, win my races, eat my meals, frown my frowns, dream my dreams."⁸¹ Factors such as intuitive sensibility, shared meanings, and linguistic nuances limit the outsider's understanding of other cultures. The anthropologist purports to derive this understanding through the methodological device known as "participant observation", taking part in the life of a small community, for a given period of time. The very concept of participant observation raises the question of the nature and degree and duration of that involvement. Evans Pritchard prescribed two years as the norm.⁸² Presumably because it is long enough for observation of the main seasons, and the major events marking the crises of life -- rites of passage, birth, puberty, marriage, and death ceremonies. Hocart considered that this requirement was unwarranted:

The idea still persists that no trustworthy material can be collected in a few and that it requires a long sojourn among savages before we can understand them. This idea being based on no proof will persist in spite of all proof⁸³.

80. John Still, *The Jungle Tide*, London, 1930: 217. The fact is that it is the "peripetatic professor" criticised by John Still who dominates research in backward countries. A prominent example is E.R. Leach whose work on a village in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka (Pul Eliya, Cambridge, 1961) aided by an interpreter (he does not acknowledge this assistance) is accepted uncritically by insiders. As Levi Strauss has said, anthropology is the outcome of a historical process which made a large part of mankind subservient to another. It is not enough for the jungle communities to be studied by "a Sinhalese trained in anthropology". If the insider is to undertake the study of his own society, anthropology must perish, in order to be reborn in a new guise.

81. Gilbert Ryle. *The Concept of Mind*. London. 1938.

82. Evans Pritchard. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. London. 1951: 76.

83. Review of Rivers's *History of Melanesian Society*, in Adam Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology, The British School. 1922-1972*, London, Penguin, 1973: 19.

There is a widespread though mistaken notion that Malinowski was the originator of the method of participant observation. Le Play adopted the method in his investigations into family budgets of European workers over a century earlier. Malinowski himself did not advocate total involvement, and the prolonged duration of his sojourn in Melanesia was due to fortuitous circumstances. He was conducting field studies when the first world war broke out, and Seligman prevailed on the British government to allow him to continue his researches rather than intern him as alien. His diaries reveal his attitude to the natives:

As for ethnology: I see the life of the natives as utterly devoid of interest or importance, something as remote from me as the life of a dog... I have a general idea about their life and some acquaintance with their language, and if I can only somehow document all this I'll have valuable material⁸⁴.

When circumstances preclude first-hand investigation *in situ* and empirical data is imperative for practical purposes such as military occupation, anthropologists did not hesitate to abandon the method of participant observation and adopt the device of "culture from a distance", interviewing Thai and Japanese students in America prior to the invasion of their countries and their subsequent "liberation"⁸⁵. There is no doubt that in the case of a society demanding immediate investigation, or a problem requiring urgent solution the use of available methods scorned by precisionists, is justified, provided the analyst is honest -- "he must, that is to say, use the best methods available and use them fairly"⁸⁶. All too frequently, unscrupulous sycophants, motivated by a desire to gain favour with the authorities, or in their pay, or to satisfy personal ambition, come up with spurious findings through participant observation which, by definition, cannot be verified, because evaluation by universal standards of validity has been pre-empted. They claim privileged access, either to "classified" information, or having secured that data by posing as a beggar, criminal, or pimp publicise sensational conclusions on subjects such as mendicacy, crime, and sex.

The weakness of sociological approaches which demand empathic involvement in other societies is that they "underestimate the difficulty of self-knowledge, just as they overestimate the difficulty of knowing other people" (Max Scheler).⁸⁷ In a sense it is easier for the sociologist to project himself into a social order alien to his own: over-familiarity with one's own society may well create a complacent myopia which experience of outlandish situations might correct. As Dilthey explained over a century and a half ago:

the inner experience in which I become aware of my own states can never by itself make me conscious of my own individuality. It is only in comparing myself with others that I come to experience what is individual in myself: only then do I become conscious of that in my own experience which differs from others.⁸⁸

84. Adam Kuper, *op.cit.*; 28.

85. Ruth Benedict. *The Crysanthemum and the Sword*. London. 19

86. T.H. Marshall. *Sociology at the Crossroads*. 17

87. Max Scheler. *The Nature of Sympathy* London. 1954:

88. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works*, ed. Hodges, London, 1944: 123.

A lively mind witnessing a play, by following an actor's words, mein, and movements, "can re-live something which lies outside any possibility of his real actual life. In other words, we can re-live in our own consciousness, incidents or events experienced by others without having experienced them ourselves. Thus it is, as Max Scheler put it, that "one who "understands" the mortal terror of a drowning man has no need at all to *undergo* such a terror, in a real, if weakened form".⁸⁹ Likewise the imminence of nuclear war makes it imperative for us "somehow to try and grasp the idea of universal destruction -- by means other than actually experiencing it".⁹⁰

VIII

It will be evident by now that what I set out to do in fulfilment of my brief -- an autobiographical essay -- has turned out to be, as it were, an anti-memoir. The reason is that recounting the minutiae of one's personal life, even if confined to one's "calling", is of little interest *per se*. And in my case, sociology as a "calling" is an integral part of life itself, rather than an uneasy appurtenance marginal to my effective life, a way of deriving an income in order to be able to survive in the existential vacuum of alienated man. It is in the course of understanding of other cultures and societies, without complete immersion in them, especially the underlying ideas, that one's own experiences acquire true significance. As explained earlier, this was Dilthey's position. In the next paragraph I briefly recount some personal events in my professional life (I have relegated the details to an appendix) before concluding with an expose of the beliefs and ideas that constitute my own social philosophy. To become conscious of the ideas that shape his actions and conduct is a primary obligation for a sociologist, especially because the importance of ideas is often underrated by people who consider themselves "practical", pragmatic, "original". Keynes has emphasised the importance of ideas vis-a-vis vested interests. Although an actor may not be conscious of them, and consider himself "original", deep seated values and ideas may remain inarticulate major premises at the back of his head, which can be corrected only by conscientization⁹¹. As Keynes says in the penultimate page of his *General Theory*:

...the ideas of economists and political philosophers both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.

89. Max Scheler, *op.cit.*

90. William J. Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power*, London, Penguin ed., 1971: 169

91. I use the concept in the sense of awakening of consciousness, "the living aspect, the fleeting instant in which society becomes, or in which men become, sentimentally conscious of themselves and of their situation vis-a-vis others". (Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le Don*, in Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Scope of Anthropology," trans S.A. and R.Paul, *Current Anthropology*, 7/ii. 1966.

Whitehead has pointed out that the growth of a science is not primarily in bulk, but in ideas. I have always held the view that the most fruitful approach to teaching sociology is the analysis of the impact of seminal ideas on social reality and policy. I do not mean the percolation of sociological jargon into everyday speech - "permissive", "status symbol", "charisma", and the like. It should rather be the ideological impact on social structure, relationships and policies. Some ideas, in the form of blueprints for social engineering, were too eccentric or utopian to have any significant impact in terms of current realities - Comte's secular priesthood of sociologists, Robert Owen's cooperative communities, etc. But did not Marx have an abiding influence on the social structure and philosophy of east European societies? Mussolini's interest in Pareto's sociology may have been the outcome of a Machiavellism read into his work, conceived as a guide to *real politik*. The impact of the nations of political leaders may also provide significant material. For good or evil, Mahatma Gandhi's homespun social philosophy, besides influencing the life styles of millions of Indians, has received professional recognition,⁹² even more so the thinking of Mao Tse Tung. This is a more rewarding mode of "indigenizing" social science than the generalized fad carried to the extreme of fetishization of a mere slogan.

In the year after my first appointment as assistant lecturer in sociology at Colombo, I spent the long vacation in London, where I completed a paper on the Scottish social reformer, Patrick Colquhoun, analysing his writings in the context of social conditions in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was published in 1954. The University moved to Peradeniya, and I was appointed Head of the Department of Sociology. Among my other activities, I organized an exhibition of paintings by George Keyt, and a concert of chamber music, which included Mozart's clarinet quintet (I was later appointed Chairman of the university Arts Council, which screened bi-weekly films, organised annual students art exhibitions, and an annual Drama Festival at the Open Air Theatre constructed by me with the cooperation of the Curator of the Park). I designed a multi-disciplinary syllabus for a special sociology degree in 1958, the subjects included sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, social statistics, criminology and social administration. The last was specially devised to give the degree a "practical" orientation. I prevailed on the secretaries of the relevant government departments -- social services, rural development, probation and child care -- to recruit sociology graduates to their staff. The subject was subsequently adopted for the Civil Service examination.

The inadequacy of salaries paid to university academic staff, compelled me to take up a post as research officer at the UNESCO Research Centre on the Social implications of industrialization in Asia, based in Calcutta. After two years it was shifted to Delhi at the end of 1959, and housed in the premises of the Institute of Economic Growth under the name Asian Research Centre on Social and Economic Development but within a few months, I accepted a chair at the University of Ceylon in October 1961,

92. Kenneth Rivett, The Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, *British J. Sociology*, 10/i, 1959.

exactly ten years after I first joined as assistant lecturer. When UNESCO commitment to the Asian Research Centre came to an end, the institution, including its library, was transferred to the Institute of Economic Growth. UNESCO made provision for an Expert to continue the regional programme. I was appointed to this position, having retired from the University of Ceylon under the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1967, which virtually reduced the autonomous status of the institutions of higher learning to the level of government Departments. I had been active in the protests by the academic staff against the proposed legislation, and led a delegation of the University Teacher's Association, a registered trade union to give evidence before a parliamentary Commission. My notice of retirement was sent from Honolulu where I was on leave as Senior Specialist at the East West Centre of the University of Hawaii. There I completed the first draft of a book on the Sociology of Development. As UNESCO's Social Science Research Adviser I travelled extensively in a vast region comprising eighteen countries from Afghanistan to Japan, spending the summer vacations at Chulalongkorn University Social Science Research Institute in Bangkok.

In contrast to the sterile intellectualism of the colonial intelligentsia of the Third World, I found a refreshing spontaneity, an individual *style* in the pragmatism of Thailand and Japan, surviving intact in their essentials despite the American occupation. Thai Buddhism was in accord with the secular values and extraverted life styles of the country, with an interpenetration which was absent in the ostensible asceticism in the praxis of Theravada Buddhism of Sri Lanka. Comparison of the ordination of a monk or the cremation of an abbot in Thailand was an edifying contrast to the parallel celebrations in Sri Lanka.⁹³

I do not believe that the multiplication of detailed case studies by anthropologists is a step towards solving the problems of social and cultural integration, discussed above, as Radcliffe - Brown thought. They may however contribute to disjointed comparative analyses, for instance that land tenure was inextricably related to kinship in one society, while land ownership is totally unrelated to kinship as among white Australians with weak kinship ties and ample land. Or the degrees of tolerance of frustration and their determinants, in different societies (there is less frustration in being out of work in societies having generous unemployment insurance schemes, than in those without institutionalized social security, in which a livelihood is essential for survival).

My studies of the 'fifties were also my reaction to the sense of alienation experienced by the colonial intelligentsia whose nostalgic traditionalism was oftentimes an utopian distortion of reality, a selective conservatism, hinging on religion, language and dress. In order to evaluate various aspects of traditional Sinhala culture, I organized a Symposium on the subject, funded by UNESCO, Paris, the proceedings of which were published in the same year as my first book. The manuscript of *Sinhalese Social Organization* was ready in 1953, but owing to the delays caused by the primitive printing

93. Cf. the translation of the Thai text pertaining to village ordination ed. Thomas Silcock, *A Village Ordination*, Bangkok. Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1976. Of particular interest are the photographs of participants dancing and singing: the carefree gaiety of the occasion contrasts the solemnity elsewhere.

technology of the University Press, was published only in 1956.⁹⁴ It had an indifferent reception. Research on "simpler peoples" was considered to be the monopoly of expatriates, three of whom reviewed the book unfairly. I reacted with petulant notes to *Man* and the *American Sociological Review*. The whole question of the ethics of probing the intimacies of life among the "simpler peoples" I subsequently discussed this question in a periodical founded and co-edited by me -- the *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*.⁹⁵ My complaint was that contemporary communities studied were not left anonymous, or even pseudonymous, in the published reports -- in this case Leach's *Pul Eliya*. "Is this cricket? Is it sufficient to express the author's 'thanks and apologies' to a people whose private lives he has laid bare to the world?"⁹⁶

In 1971/2 I served as Special Adviser on Social Planning at the Ministry of Planning and Plan implementation. The ineptitude of the bureaucrats handling planning problems made it clear to me that the colonial administration dominated by pantopragmatic generalists had outlived its usefulness and had to be replaced by a cadre of more specialized technocrats. The aura of prestige enjoyed by the Civil Servant persisted however, and they were considered omniscient, even though the charism of their heyday had been routinized. Coming from an elevated social class the old civil servant exhibited an easy confidence in his relations with Ministers, and ruled the roost, as it were, perpetuating underdevelopment in the process, writing innocuous and inexpert cabinet papers and drafting legislation uncritically accepted by politicians. There was no ideological underpinning to guide planning policy and its implementation but rather a "top-down" approach. An inter-agency team invited to study the problem of unemployment was constrained to reconstruct a coherent policy-framework on the basis of fugitive reports, ministerial declarations, Throne Speeches by the President and election manifestos⁹⁷. A *Five Year Plan* was published in 1971 but was never implemented during what was a "Time of Troubles" for the country, marked by unrest and insurgency. The only policy outcome of these events was the acceptance of a definite policy of family planning to reduce the numbers of educated unemployed at least in the future. In the circumstances I left the Ministry in April 1972, when the insurgency had taken a serious turn. It was my view that matters could have been improved had there been effective communication between the government and the universities, but many bureaucrats opposed any such linkages. When a Board was constituted to advise the Agrarian Research and Training Institute in Colombo by a foreign expert, his local counterpart objected to the inclusion of university dons -- the civil servant knew all that needed to be known, he insisted. Eventually it was the foreign expert who had to go.

94. *Sinhalese Social Organization: The Kandyan Period*, Colombo, Ceylon University Press Board, 1956; *Some Aspects of Traditional Sinhalese Culture, A Symposium*, ed., Ralph Pieris, Ceylon University Conference on Traditional Cultures, Peradeniya, 1956.

95. Founded by Dr. S. Arasaratnam and myself, who were co-editors, and Ian Goonetilleke, Managing editor. The Journal was taken over, without so much as informing the founders, and a "new series" published sporadically.

96. Pieris. 1992c.

97. *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations. A Programme of Action for Ceylon*. Geneva I.L.O, 1971; Vol. I.

Later in 1972 I was invited to return to the University at Peradeniya, preferring it to a visiting Professorship at the University of Malaya. Not having taught undergraduates for several years, I found it a harrowing experience to lecture to students whose blank faces betrayed their disinterest in the subject, attending classes in the hope of taking notes to be regurgitated at the examination. My belief that sociology was not a suitable subject for undergraduate instruction was confirmed by this experience. Fortunately by an unanticipated turn of events I was appointed short-term consultant to the U.N. Asian Development Institute in Bangkok during the last three months of the year, but the assignment stretched for three years (I had been Consultant at the same Institute for over six months in 1965 in connection with a UNICEF regional seminar on planning for children's needs). It had to be terminated after the last extension on account of the UNDP financial crisis. During this period two books on social development were completed. I analysed the social data pertaining to Asia by recourse to the development styles in terms of which the diversities of the region were differentiated.

After my return to Sri Lanka I was invited as Research Professor at the University of Colombo and held the position for two years, finally retiring in 1978 at the age of 54, in a state of seriously impaired health which plagued me for a decade. The prognosis by leading physicians of an early demise, led me to settle a trust for the promotion of social science research and the cultivation of the fine arts in a milieu unsullied by bureaucratic restraints. During the long spells of illness I confined my writing to facets of applied sociology, some written in hospital, mainly on social policy, especially medical care. Under a pseudonym, so as to distinguish them from my academic work. It was only in 1988 that my health showed signs of improvement. The time-bomb which a leading physician said I was sitting on, did not explode and I felt inclined to resume my long interrupted researches, hoping to complete two books -- one on social policy, and a magnum opus on Scenarios in the Development of Sri Lanka, besides a number of articles, including the present effort.

IX

My earlier reference to the nostalgic traditionalism of the colonial intelligentsia needs further explication. Alienated from the reality of traditional society and culture by the intrusion of westernization, they abstracted vestigial, discrete, nativist elements, arbitrarily juxtaposed alongside elements of modernity, the endresult being an aesthetic and functional incongruity. The "Aryan" village of the Dry Zone in antiquity, idealized as the best possible design for living,⁹⁸ had to be made congruent with the technological complexities of the contemporary world. Reconciliation of tradition and modernity is accomplished by resort to social fictions (analagous to legal fictions by which current judicial realities are made compatible with abstract juristic notions). The Buddhistic denial of the world, was never total. The extreme of yogic mortification of the flesh, was eschewed, and institutionalized renunciation of the mundane world prescribed by

98. By British officials such as Sir J.B. Phear and T.W. Rhys Davids over a century ago; recently by Gamini Iriyagolle. *The Truth About the Mahaveli*, Colombo, 1978.

monastic rules (*vinaya*), to regulate the conduct of monks.⁹⁹ In the process of this reconciliation, intractable dilemmas arise, for instance, strict adherence to the Law (*dhamma*) which condemns the taking of life,¹⁰⁰ as against the realities of killing enemies in "righteous" warfare, between *ahimsa* and were always present.¹⁰¹ A cynical Sinhala proverb is an edifying commentary on this dilemma: he strains his water before drinking (least he destroys minute insects) but does not hesitate to murder saints.¹⁰² The tormented conscience of transgressors had to be mollified by the apologetic gyrations of sophists, commentators, and glossators, by resort to social fictions and antidotal formulations. The pangs of alienation can also be assuaged by self-dissolution, by "a belief in the creativity and the superior worth of the ordinary people, the uneducated the unintellectual".¹⁰³ They are the custodians of the Eastern way of life, which involves a *qualified* denial of the world, on opposition to the materialistic affirmation of sort in the world in the West.¹⁰⁴ Anti-western, xenophobic, diatribes of this no wise disturb the *status quo*, thanks to the social fiction of a qualified denial of things mundane. It enables the affluent bourgeoisie to enjoy the preferred amenities of "western materialism" including electricity, telecommunication, radio and television, automobiles and air travel. Their conservatism and attachment to Buddhist, nativist, traditions, such as indigenous medicine, is highly selective, even contradictory, and the principal means of reconciling these contradictions is by resort to double standards, an adaptive hypocrisy.¹⁰⁵

Idealization of tradition emanates from a veiled conservatism which is a negation of faith in the power of reason to *dare* to undertake analysis of complex and unstable realities and to convert them into definitudes, (as qualified below) which is the raison d'être of sociology. "The social forms of the Eternal East were so taken for granted, or found to be so satisfying, that there was nothing problematic, and men were not stimulated to apply their minds to the human condition, except to nurture and cherish the

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99. For an account of monastic life in antiquity cf. R.A.L.H. Gunawardena, *Robe and Plough, Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Mediaeval Ceylon*, Arizona University Press, 1979.
100. Buddhaghosa, in a commentary, distinguishes degrees of sin in the taking of animal life; to kill an animal in order to enjoy eating its flesh was more sinful than buying meat from the market for food.
101. According to legend, when Dutta Gamani killed "millions" of Tamils, his remorse was assuaged by religious virtuosi (*arahats*) who flew through the air to reassure him by resort to the fiction that of those he had killed, only one had observed the Eight Precepts of Buddhism, and the other only three. Therefore he had killed only one-and-a-half men. Flying through the air, as well as appearing in two places simultaneously were marks of *arahat* ship. A.M. Hocart. *Flying Through the Air, in The Life-giving Myth and other Essays* London, 1954. Also Gananath Obeyesekere's "review and interpretation of the Dutta Gamani legend: *A Meditation on Conscience*." Social Scientists Association of Sri Lanka. Colombo: 1988.
102. Cf. John M. Seneviratne, *Dictionary of Proverbs of the Sinhalese*, Colombo, 1936.
103. E.A. Shils, *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity*, The Hague, Mouton, 1961.
104. Minute of Dissent in the *Report of the Ceylon University Commission*, Sessional Paper XXIII of 1959.
105. Cf. the classical article by Ginzburg, Hypocrisy as a Pathological Symptom, *International J Ethics*. XXXII/2. 1922.

values, norms and social forms inherited from their ancestors... Traditional man was in accord with his inner being; the 'culture' he accepted was not a superficial outgrowth on the margin of his effective life, but something which he lived"¹⁰⁶ In the context of aesthetic canons evolved over generations, culture acquired a certain spontaneous immediacy. As Spengler says, "Under the spell of a great tradition full achievement is possible even to a minor artist, because the living art brings him in touch with his task and the task with him"¹⁰⁷ As with the minor artist, even a mediocre sociologist confronts existential reality, and vice versa the real-life situation (including the historical past, which is parent of the present) confronts him.

Sociology as a "calling" is an integral part of life itself, rather than an uneasy exogenous transplant, marginal to real life, a means of earning a livelihood by a drudge which enables survival in the existential vacuum of alienated man. The sociological imagination can however be activated to analyse and understand even the most prosaic day-to-day concerns and occurrences. The convulsions caused by terrorism, subversion, insurgency, and nativist movements have assumed the most extreme forms of violence, mayhem, destruction and disnomia, a rejection of civilization itself. In this context the challenge of dispassionate and detached social research has become all the more important not by a vain resort to a "value free" sociology, but by analysing and articulating value premises, including one's own. Sociology, as we said earlier, has a liberating dimension, and its practitioners can aspire to be "socially unattached intellectuals"¹⁰⁸

The role of the sociologist in the context of the dilemmas confronting people in our troubled times is to analyse paradigmatic experiences¹⁰⁹ objectively, acting as a "socially unattached intellectual" free to design a social philosophy unsullied by the dictates of populist ideological pressures, even the religion, morality and institutions of the Establishment. For, as stated earlier, sociology has a liberating dimension. Existing institutions are not sacrosanct, to be upheld at the price of sanctimonious self deception. They need to be analysed and understood.¹¹⁰ One can visualise the obsolescence of marriage as an indissoluble bond (I have analysed the flexibility of the institution in Kandyian times)¹¹¹ and attachment to illusory religious beliefs.¹¹² In the understanding of the majority, religion assures a watchful and solicitous Providence in the form of a bening father-figure, redressing shortcoming, frustrations and suffering in this world,

106. From Pieris 1969b.

107. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 2 vol, New York, 1926: I. 291.

108. A concept proposed by Karl Mannheim.

109. A term proposed by Karl Mannheim.

110. When it was pointed out that an applicant for a lectureship in Law at Heidelberg was an anachrist who must favour the abolition of existing legal institutions, Max Weber took the view that it was precisely those who advocated their abolition who would be assiduous in studying the nature of these legal institutions.

111. Pieris. 1956. Part Six: I

112. Cf. Freud, *The Future of an illusion*, London, 1928. My copy, dated 18/9/44, cost Rs. 75. When Penguin Books first came out paperbacks such as Ethel Manin's *Confessions and Impressions*, Andre Maurois's biography of Shelley, *Arielect* cost 35 cents each, or three for a rupee!

in a felicitous after-life. While postulating the immortality of man, Gods are propitiated and placated in the expectation of favours even in this exiatence, the granting of these favours, particularly by Saint Jude, being acknowledged in the newspapers almost every day. Freud comments:

The whole thing is so patently infantile, so incongrous with reality that to one whose attitude to humanity is friendly it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view. It is even more humiliating to discover what a large number of those alive today, who must see that this religion is not tenable, yet try to defend it inch by inch, as if with a series of pitiful rearguard actions.¹¹³

The socially unattached intellectual will devise and promote a rational, secular, moral code. In so doing sociology will be re-born in a new guise. "Sociologists have got somehow to acquire deep understanding of emotional patterns", advises the economist, Sir Roy Harrod, after he had belatedly awakened to the fact that the discipline is "the most important subject for adult study today"¹¹⁴. If sociologists fail to understand and analyse the new problems confronting our world today, especially the anomie expressed in a rejection of all civilized values and adherence to a nihilistic counter-culture, problems which perplex and anger politicians and laymen alike, the result will not merely be the demise of sociology, but the erosion of civilization itself. Nothing, not even human life, is valued. This is in striking contrast to the high value placed on civilization by western revolutionaries and anarchists.¹¹⁵ If we perceive premonitory signs of the erosion of civilization the sociologist's urgent task is to forge appropriate modes of response to critical situations for which our culture has no articulated guidelines or built-in secular values, as in Thai society. In the latter case, sociology is only an expendable adjunct to civilization.

113. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, London, 1930: 23-24. I was greatly impressed, and influenced, by this tract.

114. Sir Roy Harrod, *Sociology, Morals and Mystery*, London, 1971.

115. The anarchist Bakunin, after a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony told the conductor, Richard Wagner, that whatever else they destroyed, this we must Preserve (cf. E.H. Carr *Michael Bakunin*, London.) Lenin was similarly moved by Beethoven's Appassionata sonata. The *Communist Manifesto* is replete with praise for the contribution of the western bourgeoisie to civilization, their fault being to deny it to the masses. When Professor T.H. Marshall asked me whether I would have opportunities for playing the 'Cello (I was in the LSE Orchestra) I said that it was unthinkable in a country in which the masses were suffering from poverty and malnutrition to promote a "high" culture. He was aghast, and exclaimed, "but then civilization would stop". On the persolation of art music to non-elite audiences in America cf. John H. Meuller. *The American Symphony Orchestra, Social History of Musical Taste*. Indiana University Press. 1951. I contemplated a doctoral dissertation on the sociology of music in 1945, but after prolonged consultation with the sociology dons at LSE it was dropped as no suitable supervisor was available at the School. There was some difficulty in finding an external examiner for my eventual dissertation on imperialism. When asked, I said "someone like Professor Toynbee", to which Marshall said "there is no one like Toynbee". My abiding interest in art music continues unabated.

In Sri Lanka, in the absence of enlightenment from concerned social scientists, people are dependent on jejune lay analyses and prescriptions. New myths of caste are fabricated on the basis of fanciful etymologies and conjectural history. Policy prescriptions are freely proffered -- fifteen minutes of "Tamil music" and a weekly broadcast talk on Hinduism are assumed to promote communal harmony, and so on. Millennia of bitter conflict is ignored. A proposal made by me for the creation of a Policy Research Institute, even if accepted, must fail owing to ignorance of even the fields of study involved, and they are numerous. But the economist being always at hand, ever ready to undertake social research for which he is totally unqualified by temperament or training, is the obvious choice, preferably, according to advertisements the micro-economist

To counter the uncertainties embedded in most social science reasoning, the concept of "fuzzy sets" has been proposed. Social studies can never approximate to the hard sciences, unless man is completely dehumanized, in which case sociology turns into cybernetics. This did occur when the older political economy was replaced by mathematical approaches. But as Ossowski has explained, "insofar as sociology becomes similar to a perfect military organization, it ceases to be a subject of sociology; instead of the interaction of individuals or the interaction of social groups, we are dealing here with a sort of interaction of components of a mechanism"¹¹⁶. Hence the goal of unending perfection of sociological techniques and methods, is the pursuit of a scientific chimera. Durkheim's optimism concerning the potential of sociology to convert social uncertainties into definitudes needs to be qualified so as to preclude the construction of mechanistic social systems, and such dehumanized constructs can create behavioural patterns for which the alienating proclivities in modern mass society provide fertile ground. Voluntaristic choice will be superseded by computerized programming of pre-ordained actions.

Human beings do not act as unthinking, disciplined, and non-sentient automatons. Hence there are definite limits to the ability of the discipline and its practitioners to provide mechanical solutions to complex problems which perplex decision makers. It is granted that "sociology need not be ashamed of wishing to be useful",¹¹⁷ but not by making exaggerated claims to solving contemporary problems. It may well be that Radcliffe Brown's remark, made some four decades ago -- that "a good deal of what is commonly called sociology in English-speaking countries, is a somewhat formless study"¹¹⁸ still holds true. But there is the opposite and equally unsatisfactory solution of converting man into a completely disciplined and non-sentient mechanism. The German jurist Gierke, in his monumental treatise on natural law and social theory in the period 1500-1800m, appeared to pose the crucial dilemma confronting theorists of

116. Ossowski, *Trans. Fifth World Congress of Sociology* (1964).

117. T.H. Marshall, *Sociology at the Crossroads*: 22.

118. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Method in Social Anthropology*, ed. M.N. Srinivas, 1958, Indian ed. 1960: 7.

the time: "Organism or mechanism -- which will you take?"¹¹⁹ In the search for behavioural constants characteristic of a defined universe of actors, we have the sound advice that we are first and foremost concerned with the typical and *relatively structured* activities, with "what happens when typical dispositions encounter typical situations". Whether it be actions, transactions, relationships or concepts:

Always aim at the bull's-eye. Don't bother about the outer edges. The frontier regions of any class or concept are always occupied by a hoard of oddities and eccentrics, belonging to no significant category of phenomena, but offering fascinating opportunities for interminable and quite fruitless argument.¹²⁰

Unfortunately, in a great deal of modern sociologizing, the peripheral oddities take precedence over the central, the typical. The curiosity with which antiquarians studied demenology and witchcraft a century and a half ago as a peripheral phenomena, now tends to occupy the centre of sociological interest, relegating the phenomena of widespread anomie to the periphery.

The social convulsions which came in the wake of nativistic movements, insurgency and subversion, represent a counter-culture evolved in opposition to, to the positive values of bourgeois culture -- the greed, repression, exploitation, corruption and abuse of power coming to a climax in the aftermath of the unrestrained market economy in the period after 1977. Far from being stabilized after a decade these aberrations have erupted in the most extreme forms of disnomia. -- alienation, indiscriminate destruction of life and property, violence and mayhem -- generally a rejection of civilization itself. It is significant that some of the targets of the counter-culture is the renewal of values distorted by untrammelled capitalism. The exorbitant fees charged by medical specialists, an expression of unconscionable greed for gain was regulated in the South by the subversives. Those guilty of bribery and arbitrary exercise of power were ruthlessly decimated. Even the government had to concede that the insistence on nationalizing the private medical college was because it was providing education for children of the rich. It was also agreed that casinos would be confined to foreigners only, although naked gambling in the multiplying state lotteries remains. In the counter culture of undergraduates two of the four "wishes" identified by W.I. Thomas -- "new experience", "security"¹²¹ were long ago translated into "thrill vadaya" (excitement) and "Thatvaya" (status or position). It would appear that Comte's early proposal for a priesthood of sociologists to monitor the observance of secular moral values, is still a live issue. In the circumstances there is an urgent need for a body of professional sociologists equally respected for their integrity as for their expertise. I consider that these twin requirements -- honesty and analytic acumen-- are indispensable ingredients of the true "calling" of sociology.

119. Gierke *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*, ed. Ernest Barker. Cambridge University Press. 1950. I first referred to this in my *UCR* articles of 1951/2.

120. T.H. Marshall, *op.cit.*

121. W.I. Thomas. *The Unadjusted Girl*, Boston, 1905, The four "wishes" were further discussed in the lengthy introduction to *the Polish Peasant*.