

THE THREE SOURCES OF  
HUMAN VALUES

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*Prophete rechts, Prophete links,  
Das Weltkind in der Mitten*

J. W. Goethe\*\*

*The errors of sociobiology*

The challenge which made me re-order my thoughts on the present subject was an unusually explicit statement of what I now recognize as a widespread error implicit in much current discussion. I met it in an interesting new work of what is regarded as the new American science of sociobiology, Dr G. E. Pugh's *The Biological Origin of Human Values*,<sup>1</sup> a book which has received great praise from the recognized head of this school, Professor Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University.<sup>2</sup> The startling point about it is that its whole argument is based on the express assumption that there are only two kinds of human values which Dr Pugh designates as 'primary' and 'secondary', meaning by the first term those which are genetically determined and therefore innate, while he defines the secondary ones as 'products of rational thought'.<sup>3</sup>

Social biology is, of course, the outcome of what is now already a fairly long development. Older members of the London School of Economics will remember that more than forty years ago a chair of social biology was established there. We have since had the great development of the fascinating study of ethology, founded by Sir Julian Huxley,<sup>4</sup> Konrad Lorenz,<sup>5</sup> and Niko Tinbergen,<sup>6</sup> now rapidly developed by their many gifted followers,<sup>7</sup> as well as a large number of American students. I must admit that even in the work of my Viennese friend Lorenz, which I have been following closely for fifty years, I have occasionally felt uneasy about an all-too-rapid application of conclusions drawn from the observation of animals to the explanation of human conduct. But none of these has done me

the favour to state as a basic assumption and to proceed consistently on what with the others seemed occasional careless formulations, namely that those two kinds of values are the only kinds of human values.

What is so surprising about this view occurring so frequently among biologists,<sup>8</sup> is that one might rather have expected that they would be sympathetic to that analogous yet in important respects different process of selective evolution to which is due the formation of complex cultural structures. Indeed, the idea of cultural evolution is undoubtedly older than the biological concept of evolution. It is even probable that its application by Charles Darwin to biology was, through his grandfather Erasmus, derived from the cultural evolution concept of Bernard Mandeville and David Hume, if not more directly from the contemporary historical schools of law and language.<sup>9</sup> It is true that, after Darwin, those 'social Darwinists' who had needed Darwin to learn what was an older tradition in their own subjects, had somewhat spoiled the case by concentrating on the selection of congenitally more fit individuals, the slowness of which makes it comparatively unimportant for cultural evolution, and at the same time neglecting the decisively important selective evolution of rules and practices. But there was certainly no justification for some biologists treating evolution as solely a genetic process,<sup>10</sup> and completely forgetting about the similar but much faster process of cultural evolution that now dominates the human scene and presents to our intelligence problems it has not yet learnt to master.

What I had not foreseen, however, was that a close examination of this mistake, common among some specialists, would lead right to the heart of some of the most burning moral and political issues of our time. What at first may seem a question of concern only to specialists, turns out to be a paradigm of some of the gravest ruling misconceptions. Though I rather hope that most of what I shall have to say is somewhat familiar to cultural anthropologists – and the concept of cultural evolution has of course been stressed not only by L. T. Hobhouse and his followers<sup>11</sup> and more recently particularly by Sir Julian Huxley,<sup>12</sup> Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders<sup>13</sup> and C. H. Waddington<sup>14</sup> in Britain and even more by G. G. Simpson, Theodosius Dobzhansky<sup>15</sup> and Donald T. Campbell<sup>16</sup> in the USA, it seems to me that the attention of moral philosophers, political scientists and economists still needs to be emphatically drawn to its importance. What has yet to be more widely recognized is that the present order of society has largely arisen, not by design, but by the

prevailing of the more effective institutions in a process of competition.

*Culture is neither natural nor artificial, neither genetically transmitted nor rationally designed.* It is a tradition of learnt rules of conduct which have never been 'invented' and whose functions the acting individuals usually do not understand. There is surely as much justification to speak of the wisdom of culture as of the wisdom of nature – except, perhaps, that, because of the powers of government, errors of the former are less easily corrected.

It is here that the constructivistic Cartesian approach<sup>17</sup> has made thinkers accept as 'good' for a long time only what were either innate or deliberately chosen rules, and to regard all merely grown formations as mere products of accident or caprice. Indeed, 'merely cultural' has now to many the connotation of changeable at will, arbitrary, superficial, or dispensable. Actually, however, civilization has largely been made possible by subjugating the innate animal instincts to the non-rational customs which made possible the formation of larger orderly groups of gradually increasing size.

### *The process of cultural evolution*

That cultural evolution is not the result of human reason consciously building institutions, but of a process in which culture and reason developed concurrently is, perhaps, beginning to be more widely understood. *It is probably no more justified to claim that thinking man has created his culture than that culture created his reason*<sup>18</sup> As I have repeatedly had occasion to point out, the mistaken view has become deeply embedded in our thinking through the false dichotomy between what is 'natural' and what is 'artificial' which we have inherited from the ancient Greeks.<sup>19</sup> The structures formed by traditional human practices are neither natural in the sense of being genetically determined, nor artificial in the sense of being the product of intelligent design, but the result of a process of winnowing or sifting,<sup>20</sup> directed by the differential advantages gained by groups from practices adopted for some unknown and perhaps purely accidental reasons. We know now that not only among animals such as birds and particularly apes, learnt habits are transmitted by imitation, and even that different 'cultures' may develop among different groups of them,<sup>21</sup> but also that such acquired cultural traits may affect physiological evolution – as is obvious in the case of language: its rudimentary appearance

undoubtedly made the physical capacity of clear articulation a great advantage, favouring genetic selection of a suitable speech apparatus.<sup>22</sup>

Nearly all writings on this topic stress that what we call cultural evolution took place during the last 1 per cent of the time during which *Homo sapiens* existed. With respect to what we mean by cultural evolution in a narrower sense, that is, the fast and accelerating development of civilization, this is true enough. Since it differs from genetic evolution by relying on the transmission of acquired properties, it is very fast, and once it dominates, it swamps genetic evolution. But this does not justify the misconception that it was the developed mind which in turn directed cultural evolution. This took place not merely after the appearance of *Homo sapiens*, but also during the much longer earlier existence of the genus *Homo* and its hominid ancestors. To repeat: *mind and culture developed concurrently and not successively*. Once we recognize this, we find that we know so little about precisely how this development took place, of which we have so few recognizable fossils, that we are reduced to reconstruct it as a sort of conjectural history in the sense of the Scottish moral philosophers of the eighteenth century. The facts about which we know almost nothing are the evolution of those rules of conduct which governed the structure and functioning of the various small groups of men in which the race developed. On this the study of still surviving primitive people can tell us little. Though the conception of conjectural history is somewhat suspect today, when we cannot say precisely how things did happen, to understand how they could have come about may be an important insight. The evolution of society and of language and the evolution of mind raise in this respect the same difficulty: the most important part of cultural evolution, the taming of the savage, was completed long before recorded history begins. It is this cultural evolution which man alone has undergone that now distinguishes him from the other animals. As Sir Ernest Gombrich put it somewhere: 'The history of civilization and of culture was the history of man's rise from a near animal state to polite society, the cultivation of arts, the adoption of civilized values and the free exercise of reason.'<sup>23</sup>

To understand this development we must completely discard the conception that man was able to develop culture because he was endowed with reason. What apparently distinguished him

was the capacity to imitate and to pass on what he had learned. Man probably began with a superior capacity to learn what to do – or even more, what not to do – in different circumstances. And much if not most of what he learnt about what to do he probably learnt by learning the meaning of words.<sup>24</sup> Rules for his conduct which made him adapt what he did to his environment were certainly more important to him than ‘knowledge’ about how other things behaved. In other words: man has certainly more often learnt to do the right thing without comprehending why it was the right thing, and he still is often served better by custom than by understanding. Other objects were primarily defined for him by the appropriate way of conduct towards them. It was a repertoire of learnt rules which told him what was the right and what was the wrong way of acting in different circumstances that gave him his increasing capacity to adapt to changing conditions – and particularly to cooperate with the other members of his group. Thus a tradition of rules of conduct, existing apart from any one individual who had learnt them, began to govern human life.<sup>25</sup> It was when these learnt rules, involving classifications of different kinds of objects, began to include a sort of model of the environment that enabled man to predict and anticipate in action external events, that what we call reason appeared.<sup>26</sup> *There was then probably much more ‘intelligence’ incorporated in the system of rules of conduct than in man’s thoughts about his surroundings.*

It is therefore misleading to represent the individual brain or mind as the capping stone of the hierarchy of complex structures produced by evolution, which then designed what we call culture. The mind is embedded in a traditional impersonal structure of learnt rules, and its capacity to order experience is an acquired replica of cultural patterns which every individual mind finds given. *The brain is an organ enabling us to absorb, but not to design culture.* This ‘world 3’, as Sir Karl Popper has called it,<sup>27</sup> though at all times kept in existence by millions of separate brains participating in it, is the outcome of a process of evolution distinct from the biological evolution of the brain, the elaborate structure of which became useful when there was a cultural tradition to absorb. Or, to put it differently, mind can exist only as part of another independently existing distinct structure or order, though that order persists and can develop only because millions of minds constantly absorb and modify parts of it. If we are to understand it, we must direct our attention to that process of sifting of practices which sociobiology

systematically neglects. This is the third and most important source of what in the title of this lecture I have called human values and about which we necessarily know little, but to which I still want to devote most of what I have to say. Before I turn, however, to the specific questions of how such social structures evolved, it may be helpful if I briefly consider some of the methodological issues which arise in all attempts to analyse such grown complex structures.

*The evolution of self-maintaining complex structures*

We understand now that *all* enduring structures above the level of the simplest atoms, and up to the brain and society, are the results of, and can be explained only in terms of, processes of selective evolution,<sup>28</sup> and that the more complex ones maintain themselves by constant adaptation of their internal states to changes in the environment. 'Wherever we look, we discover evolutionary processes leading to diversification and increasing complexity' (Nicolis and Prigogine; see n. 33). These changes in structure are brought about by their elements possessing such regularities of conduct, or such capacities to follow rules, that the result of their individual actions will be to restore the order of the whole if it is disturbed by external influences. Hence what on an earlier occasion I have called the twin concepts of evolution and spontaneous order<sup>29</sup> enables us to account for the persistence of these complex structures, not by a simple conception of one-directional laws of cause and effect, but by a complex interaction of patterns which Professor Donald Campbell described as 'downward causation'.<sup>30</sup>

This insight has greatly altered our approach to the explanation of, and our views about the achievable scope of our endeavours to explain, such complex phenomena. There is now, in particular, no justification for believing that the search for quantitative relationships, which proved so effective for accounting for the interdependence of two or three different variables, can be of much help in the explanation of the self-maintaining structures that exist only because of their self-maintaining attributes.<sup>31</sup> One of the most important of these self-generating orders is the wide-ranging division of labour which implies the mutual adjustment of activities of people who do not know each other. This foundation of modern civilization was first understood by Adam Smith in terms of the operation of feedback mechanism by which he anticipated what we now know as cybernetics.<sup>32</sup> The once popular organismic interpre-

tations of social phenomena, that tried to account for one unexplained order by the analogy with another equally unexplained, has now been replaced by system theory, originally developed by yet another Viennese friend, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, and his numerous followers.<sup>33</sup> This has brought out the common features of those diverse complex orders which are also discussed by information and communication theory and semiotics.<sup>34</sup>

In particular, in order to explain the economic aspects of large social systems, we have to account for the course of a flowing stream, constantly adapting itself as a whole to changes in circumstances of which each participant can know only a small fraction, and not for a hypothetical state of equilibrium determined by a set of ascertainable data. And the numerical measurements with which the majority of economists are still occupied today may be of interest as historical facts; but for the theoretical explanation of those patterns which restore themselves, the quantitative data are about as significant as it would be for human biology if it concentrated on explaining the different sizes and shapes of such human organs as stomachs and livers of different individuals which happen to appear in the dissecting room very different from, and to resemble only rarely, the standard size or shapes in the textbooks.<sup>35</sup> With the functions of the system these magnitudes have evidently very little to do.

*The stratification of rules of conduct*<sup>36</sup>

But, to return to my central theme: the differences between the rules which have developed by each of the three distinct processes has led to a *super-imposition of not merely three layers of rules, but of many more*, according as traditions have been preserved from the successive stages through which cultural evolution has passed. The consequence is that modern man is torn by conflicts which torment him and force him into ever-accelerating further changes. There is, of course, in the first instance, the solid, i.e. little changing foundation of genetically inherited, 'instinctive' drives which are determined by his physiological structure. There are then all the remains of the traditions acquired in the successive types of social structures through which he has passed – rules which he did not deliberately choose but which have spread because some practices enhanced the prosperity of certain groups and led to their expansion, perhaps less by more rapid procreation than by the attraction of outsiders. And there is, third, on top of all

this, the thin layer of rules, deliberately adopted or modified to serve known purposes.

The transition from the small band to the settled community and finally to the open society and with it to civilization was due to men learning to obey the same abstract rules instead of being guided by innate instincts to pursue common perceived goals. The innate natural longings were appropriate to the condition of life of the small band during which man had developed the neural structure which is still characteristic of *Homo sapiens*. These innate structures built into man's organization in the course of perhaps 50,000 generations were adapted to a wholly different life from that which he has made for himself during the last 500, or for most of us only 100, generations or so. It would probably be more correct to equate these 'natural' instincts with 'animal' rather than with characteristically human or good instincts. Indeed, the general use of 'natural' as a term of praise is becoming very misleading, because one of the main functions of the rules learned later was to restrain the innate or natural instincts in the manner that was required to make the Great Society possible. We are still inclined to assume that what is natural must be good; but it may be very far from good in the Great Society. What has made men good is neither nature nor reason but tradition. There is not much common humanity in the biological endowment of the species. But most groups had to acquire certain similar traits to form into larger societies; or, more probably, those who did not were exterminated by those who did. And though we still share most of the emotional traits of primitive man, he does not share all ours, or the restraints which made civilization possible. Instead of the direct pursuit of felt needs or perceived objects, the obedience to learnt rules has become necessary to restrain those natural instincts which do not fit into the order of the open society. It is this 'discipline' (one of the lexical meanings of this word is 'systems of rules of conduct') against which man still revolts.

The morals which maintain the open society do not serve to gratify human emotions – which never was an aim of evolution – but they served only as the signals that told the individual what he ought to do in the kind of society in which he had lived in the dim past. What is still only imperfectly appreciated is that the cultural selection of new learnt rules became necessary chiefly in order to repress some of the innate rules which were adapted to the hunting and gathering life of the small bands of fifteen to forty persons, led by a

headman and defending a territory against all outsiders. From that stage practically all advance had to be achieved by infringing or repressing some of the innate rules and replacing them by new ones which made the co-ordination of activities of larger groups possible. Most of these steps in the evolution of culture were made possible by some individuals breaking some traditional rules and practising new forms of conduct – not because they understood them to be better, but because the groups which acted on them prospered more than others and grew.<sup>37</sup> We must not be surprised that these rules often took the form of magic or ritual. The conditions of admission to the group was to accept all its rules, though few understood what depended on the observance of any particular one. There was just in each group only one acceptable way of doing things, with little attempt to distinguish between effectiveness and moral desirability.

*Customary rules and economic order*

It would be interesting, but I cannot attempt here, to account for the succession of the different economic orders through which civilization has passed in terms of changes in the rules of conduct. They made that evolution possible mostly by relaxations of prohibitions: an evolution of individual freedom and a development of rules which protected the individual rather than commanded it to do particular things. There can be little doubt that from the toleration of bartering with the outsider, the recognition of delimited private property, especially in land, the enforcement of contractual obligations, the competition with fellow craftsmen in the same trade, the variability of initially customary prices, the lending of money, particularly at interest, were all initially infringements of customary rules – so many falls from grace. And the law-breakers, who were to be path-breakers, certainly did not introduce the new rules because they recognized that they were beneficial to the community, but they simply started some practices advantageous to them which then did prove beneficial to the group in which they prevailed. There can, for instance, be little doubt that Dr Pugh is right when he observes,

within primitive human society 'sharing' is a way of life. . . .  
The sharing is not limited to food, but extends to all kinds of resources. The practical result is that scarce resources are shared within the society approximately in proportion to

need. This behaviour may reflect some innate and uniquely human values that evolved during the transition to a hunting economy.<sup>38</sup>

That was probably true enough in that stage of development. But these habits had to be shed again to make the transition to the market economy and the open society possible. The steps of this transition were all breaches of that 'solidarity' which governed the small group and which are still resented. Yet they were the steps towards almost all that we now call civilization. The greatest change which man has still only partially digested came with the transition from the face-to-face society<sup>39</sup> to what Sir Karl Popper has appropriately called the abstract society:<sup>40</sup> a society in which no longer the known needs of known people but only abstract rules and impersonal signals guide action towards strangers. This made a specialization possible far beyond the range any one man can survey.

Even today the overwhelming majority of people, including, I am afraid, a good many supposed economists, do not yet understand that this extensive social division of labour, based on widely dispersed information, has been made possible entirely by the use of those impersonal signals which emerge from the market process and tell people what to do in order to adapt their activities to events of which they have no direct knowledge. That in an economic order involving a far-ranging division of labour it can no longer be the pursuit of perceived common ends but only abstract rules of conduct – and the whole relationship between such rules of individual conduct and the formation of an order which I have tried to make clear in earlier volumes of this work – is an insight which most people still refuse to accept. That neither what is instinctively recognized as right, nor what is rationally recognized as serving specific purposes, but inherited traditional rules, or that what is neither instinct nor reason but tradition should often be most beneficial to the functioning of society, is a truth which the dominant constructivistic outlook of our times refuses to accept. If modern man finds that his inborn instincts do not always lead him in the right direction, he at least flatters himself that it was his reason which made him recognize that a different kind of conduct will serve his innate values better. The conception that man has, in the service of his innate desires, consciously constructed an order of society is, however, erroneous, because without the cultural evolution which lies between instinct and the capacity of rational design he would not have possessed the reason which now makes him try to do so.

*Man did not adopt new rules of conduct because he was intelligent. He became intelligent by submitting to new rules of conduct.* The most important insight which so many rationalists still resist and are even inclined to brand as a superstition, namely that man has not only never invented his most beneficial institutions, from language to morals and law, and even today does not yet understand why he should preserve them when they satisfy neither his instincts nor his reason, still needs to be emphasized. The basic tools of civilization – language, morals, law and money – are all the result of spontaneous growth and not of design, and of the last two organized power has got hold and thoroughly corrupted them.

Although the Left is still inclined to brand all such efforts as apologetics, it may still be one of the most important tasks of our intelligence to discover the significance of rules we never deliberately made, and the obedience to which builds more complex orders than we can understand. I have already pointed out that the pleasure which man is led to strive for is of course not the end which evolution serves but merely the signal that in primitive conditions made the individual do what was usually required for the preservation of the group, but which under present conditions may no longer do so. The constructivistic theories of utilitarianism that derive the now valid rules from their serving individual pleasure are therefore completely mistaken. The rules which contemporary man has learnt to obey have indeed made possible an immense proliferation of the human race. I am not so certain that this has also increased the pleasure of the several individuals.

### *The discipline of freedom*

*Man has not developed in freedom.* The member of the little band to which he had had to stick in order to survive was anything but free. *Freedom is an artefact of civilization* that released man from the trammels of the small group, the momentary moods of which even the leader had to obey. Freedom was made possible by the gradual evolution of *the discipline of civilization which is at the same time the discipline of freedom.* It protects him by impersonal abstract rules against arbitrary violence of others and enables each individual to try to build for himself a protected domain with which nobody else is allowed to interfere and within which he can use his own knowledge for his own purposes. We owe our freedom to restraints of freedom. 'For', Locke wrote, 'who could be free when every other man's humour might domineer over him?' (2nd Treatise, sect. 57.)

The great change which produced an order of society which became increasingly incomprehensible to man, and for the preservation of which he had to submit to learnt rules which were often contrary to his innate instincts, was the transition from the face-to-face society, or at least of groups consisting of known and recognizable members, to the open abstract society that was no longer held together by common concrete ends but only by the obedience to the same abstract rules.<sup>41</sup> What man probably found most difficult to comprehend was that the only common values of an open and free society were not concrete objects to be achieved, but only those common abstract rules of conduct that secured the constant maintenance of an equally abstract order which merely assured to the individual better prospects of achieving his individual ends but gave him no claims to particular things.<sup>42</sup>

The conduct required for the preservation of a small band of hunters and gatherers, and that presupposed by an open society based on exchange, are very different. But while mankind had hundreds of thousands of years to acquire and genetically to embody the responses needed for the former, it was necessary for the rise of the latter that he not only learned to acquire new rules, but that some of the new rules served precisely to repress the instinctive reactions no longer appropriate to the Great Society. These new rules were not supported by the awareness that they were more effective. *We have never designed our economic system. We were not intelligent enough for that. We have stumbled into it and it has carried us to unforeseen heights and given rise to ambitions which may yet lead us to destroy it.*

This development must be wholly unintelligible to all those who recognize only innate drives on the one hand and deliberately designed systems of rules on the other. But if anything is certain it is that no person who was not already familiar with the market could have designed the economic order which is capable of maintaining the present numbers of mankind.

This exchange society and the guidance of the co-ordination of a far-ranging division of labour by variable market prices was made possible by the spreading of certain gradually evolved moral beliefs which, after they had spread, most men in the Western world learned to accept. These rules were inevitably learned by all the members of a population consisting chiefly of independent farmers, artisans and merchants and their servants and apprentices who shared the daily experiences of their masters. They held an ethos

that esteemed the prudent man, the good husbandman and provider who looked after the future of his family and his business by building up capital, guided less by the desire to be able to consume much than by the wish to be regarded as successful by his fellows who pursued similar aims.<sup>43</sup> It was the thousands of individuals who practised the new routine more than the occasional successful innovators whom they would imitate that maintained the market order. Its mores involved withholding from the known needy neighbours what they might require in order to serve the unknown needs of thousands of unknown others. Financial gain rather than the pursuit of a known common good became not only the basis of approval but also the cause of the increase of general wealth.

*The re-emergence of suppressed primordial instincts*

At present, however, an ever increasing part of the population of the Western World grow up as members of large organizations and thus as strangers to those rules of the market which have made the great open society possible. To them the market economy is largely incomprehensible; they have never practised the rules on which it rests, and its results seem to them irrational and immoral. They often see in it merely an arbitrary structure maintained by some sinister power. In consequence, the long-submerged innate instincts have again surged to the top. Their demand for a just distribution in which organized power is to be used to allocate to each what he deserves, is thus strictly an *atavism*, based on primordial emotions. And it is these widely prevalent feelings to which prophets, moral philosophers and constructivists appeal by their plan for the deliberate creation of a new type society.<sup>44</sup>

But, though they all appeal to the same emotions, their arguments take very different and in some respects almost contradictory forms. A first group proposes a return to the older rules of conduct which have prevailed in the distant past and are still dear to men's sentiments. A second wants to construct new rules which will better serve the innate desires of the individuals. Religious prophets and ethical philosophers have of course at all times been mostly reactionaries, defending the old against the new principles. Indeed, in most parts of the world the development of an open market economy has long been prevented by those very morals preached by prophets and philosophers, even before governmental measures

did the same. *We must admit that modern civilization has become largely possible by the disregard of the injunctions of those indignant moralists.* As has been well said by the French historian Jean Bachelier, '*the expansion of capitalism owes its origins and raison d'être to political anarchy*'.<sup>45</sup> That is true enough of the Middle Ages, which, however, could draw on the teaching of the ancient Greeks who – in some measure also as a result of political anarchy – had not only discovered individual liberty and private property,<sup>46</sup> but also the inseparability of the two,<sup>47</sup> and thereby created the first civilization of free men.

When the prophets and philosophers, from Moses to Plato and St Augustine, from Rousseau to Marx and Freud, protested against the prevailing morals, clearly none of them had any grasp of the extent to which the practices which they condemned had made possible the civilization of which they were part. They had no conception that the system of competitive prices and remunerations signalling to the individual what to do, had made possible that extensive specialization by informing the individuals how best to serve others of whose existence they might not know – and to use in this opportunities of the availability of which they also had no direct knowledge. Nor did they understand that those condemned moral beliefs were less the effect than the cause of the evolution of the market economy.

But the gravest deficiency of the older prophets was their belief that the intuitively perceived ethical values, divined out of the depth of man's breast, were immutable and eternal. This prevented them from recognizing that all rules of conduct served a particular kind of order to society, and that, though such a society will find it necessary to enforce its rules of conduct in order to protect itself against disruption, it is not society with a given structure that creates the rules appropriate to it, but the rules which have been practised by a few and then imitated by many which created a social order of a particular kind. Tradition is not something constant but the product of a process of selection guided not by reason but by success. It changes but can rarely be deliberately changed. Cultural selection is not a rational process; it is not guided by but it creates reason.

The belief in the immutability and permanence of our moral rules receives of course some support from the recognition that as little as we have designed our whole moral system, is it in our power to change it as a whole.<sup>48</sup> We do not really understand how it maintains the order of actions on which the co-ordination of the activities of

many millions depends.<sup>49</sup> And since we owe the order of our society to a tradition of rules which we only imperfectly understand, *all progress must be based on tradition*. We must build on tradition and can only tinker with its products.<sup>50</sup> It is only by recognizing the conflict between a given rule and the rest of our moral beliefs that we can justify our rejection of an established rule. Even the success of an innovation by a rule-breaker, and the trust of those who follow him, has to be bought by the esteem he has earned by the scrupulous observation of most of the existing rules. To become legitimized, the new rules have to obtain the approval of society at large – not by a formal vote, but by gradually spreading acceptance. And though we must constantly re-examine our rules and be prepared to question every single one of them, we can always do so only in terms of their consistency or compatibility with the rest of the system from the angle of their effectiveness in contributing to the formation of the same kind of overall order of actions which all the other rules serve.<sup>51</sup> There is thus certainly room for improvement, but we cannot redesign but only further evolve what we do not fully comprehend.

The successive changes in morals were therefore not a moral decline, even though they often offended inherited sentiments, but a necessary condition to the rise of the open society of free men. The confusion prevailing in this respect is most clearly shown by the common identification of the terms 'altruistic' and 'moral',<sup>52</sup> and the constant abuse of the former, especially by the sociobiologists,<sup>53</sup> to describe any action which is unpleasant or harmful to the doer but beneficial to society. Ethics is not a matter of choice. We have not designed it and cannot design it. And perhaps all that is innate is the fear of the frown and other signs of disapproval of our fellows. The rules which we learn to observe are the result of cultural evolution. We can endeavour to improve the system of rules by seeking to reconcile its internal conflicts or its conflicts with our emotions. But instinct or intuition do not entitle us to reject a particular demand of the prevailing moral code, and only a responsible effort to judge it as part of the system of other requirements may make it morally legitimate to infringe a particular rule.

There is, however, so far as present society is concerned, no 'natural goodness', because with his innate instincts man could never have built the civilization on which the numbers of present mankind depend for their lives. To be able to do so, he had to

shed many sentiments that were good for the small band, and to submit to the sacrifices which the discipline of freedom demands but which he hates. The abstract society rests on learnt rules and not on pursuing perceived desirable common objects: and wanting to do good to known people will not achieve the most for the community, but only the observation of its abstract and seemingly purposeless rules. Yet this little satisfies our deeply engrained feelings, or only so long as it brings us the esteem of our fellows.<sup>54</sup>

*Evolution, tradition and progress*

I have so far carefully avoided saying that evolution is identical with progress, but when it becomes clear that it was the evolution of a tradition which made civilization possible, we may at least say that spontaneous evolution is a necessary if not a sufficient condition of progress. And though it clearly produces also much that we did not foresee and do not like when we see it, it does bring to ever-increasing numbers what they have been mainly striving for. We often do not like it because the new possibilities always also bring a new discipline. *Man has been civilized very much against his wishes.* It was the price he had to pay for being able to raise a larger number of children. We especially dislike the economic disciplines and economists are often accused of overrating the importance of the economic aspects of the process. The indispensable rules of the free society require from us much that is unpleasant, such as suffering competition from others, seeing others being richer than ourselves, etc., etc. But it is a misunderstanding when it is suggested that the economists want everything to serve economic goals. Strictly speaking, no final ends are economic, and the so-called economic goals which we pursue are at most intermediate goals which tell us how to serve others for ends which are ultimately non-economic.<sup>55</sup> And it is the discipline of the market which forces us to calculate, that is, to be responsible for the means we use up in the pursuit of our ends.

Unfortunately social usefulness is not distributed according to any principles of justice – and could be so distributed only by some authority assigning specific tasks to particular individuals, and rewarding them for how industriously and faithfully they have

carried out orders, but depriving them at the same time of the use of their own knowledge for their own values. Any attempt to make the remuneration of the different services correspond to our atavistic conception of distributive justice must destroy the effective utilization of the dispersed individual knowledge, and what we know as a pluralistic society.

That progress may be faster than we like, and that we might be better able to digest it if it were slower, I will not deny. But, unfortunately, *progress cannot be dosed*, (nor, for that matter, economic growth!) All we can do is to create conditions favourable to it and then hope for the best.<sup>56</sup> It may be stimulated or damped by policy, but nobody can predict the precise effects of such measures; to pretend to know the desirable direction of progress seems to me to be the extreme of hubris. Guided progress would not be progress. But civilization has fortunately outstripped the possibility of collective control, otherwise we would probably smother it.

I can already hear our modern intellectuals hurling against such an emphasis on tradition their deadly thunderbolt of 'conservative thinking'. But to me there can be no doubt that it were favourable moral traditions which made particular groups strong rather than intellectual design that made the progress of the past possible and will do so also in the future. To confine evolution to what we can foresee would be to stop progress; and it is due to the favourable framework which is provided by a free market but which I cannot further describe here that the new which is better has a chance to emerge.

### *The construction of new morals to serve old instincts: Marx*

The real leaders among the reactionary social philosophers are of course all the socialists. Indeed the whole of socialism is a result of that revival of primordial instincts, though most of its theorists are too sophisticated to deceive themselves that in the great society those old instincts could be satisfied by re-instating the rules of conduct that governed primitive man. So these recidivists join the opposite wing and endeavour to construe new morals serving the instinctive yearnings.

The extent to which particularly Karl Marx was completely unaware of the manner in which appropriate rules of individual conduct induce the formation of an order in the Great Society is best

seen when we inquire what made him speak of the 'chaos' of capitalist production. What prevented him from appreciating the signal-function of prices through which people are informed what they ought to do was, of course, his labour theory of value. His vain search for a physical cause of value made him regard prices as determined by labour costs, that is, by what people had done in the past rather than as the signal telling them what they must do in order to be able to sell their products. In consequence, any Marxist is to the present day wholly incapable of understanding that self-generating order, or to see how a selective evolution that knows no laws that determine its direction can produce a self-directing order. Apart from the impossibility of bringing about by central direction an efficient social division of labour by inducing the constant adaptation to the ever-changing awareness of events possessed by millions of people, his whole scheme suffers from the illusion that in a society of free individuals in which the remuneration offered tells the people what to do, the products could be distributed by some principles of justice.

But if the illusion of social justice must be sooner or later disappointed,<sup>57</sup> the most destructive of the constructivistic morals is egalitarianism – for which Karl Marx can certainly *not* be blamed. It is wholly destructive because it not only deprives the individuals of the signals which alone can offer to them the opportunity of a choice of the direction of their efforts, but even more through eliminating the one inducement by which free men can be made to observe any moral rules: the differentiating esteem by their fellows. I have no time to analyse here the dreadful confusion which leads from the fundamental presupposition of a free society, that all must be judged and treated by others according to the same rules (the equality before the law), to the demand that government should treat different people differently in order to place them in the same material position. This might indeed be the only 'just' rule for any socialist system in which the power of coercion must be used to determine both the assignment to kinds of work and the distribution of incomes. An egalitarian distribution would necessarily remove all basis for the individual's decision how they are to fit themselves into the pattern of general activities and leave only outright command as the foundation of all order.

But as moral views create institutions, so institutions create moral views; and under the prevailing form of unlimited democracy in which the power to do so creates the necessity of benefiting par-

particular groups, government is led to concede claims the satisfaction of which destroys all morals. While the realization of socialism would make the scope of private moral conduct dwindle, the political necessity of gratifying all demands of large groups must lead to the degeneration and destruction of all morals.

All morals rest on the different esteem in which different persons are held by their fellows according to their conforming to accepted moral standards. It is this which makes moral conduct a social value. Like all rules of conduct prevailing in a society, and the observance of which makes an individual a member of the society, their acceptance demands equal application to all. This involves that morals are preserved by discriminating between people who observe them and those who do not, irrespective of why particular people may infringe them. *Morals presuppose a striving for excellence and the recognition that in this some succeed better than others*, without inquiring for the reasons which we can never know. Those who observe the rules are regarded as better in the sense of being of superior value compared with those who do not, and whom in consequence the others may not be willing to admit into their company. Without this morals would not persist.

I doubt whether any moral rule could be preserved without the exclusion of those who regularly infringe it from decent company – or even without people not allowing their children to mix with those who have bad manners. It is by the separation of groups and their distinctive principles of admission to them that sanctions of moral behaviour operate. Democratic morals may demand a presumption that a person will conduct himself honestly and decently until he proves the contrary – but they cannot require us to suspend that essential discipline without destroying moral beliefs.

The conscientious and courageous may on rare occasions decide to brave general opinion and to disregard a particular rule which he regards as wrong, if he proves his general respect for the prevailing moral rules by carefully observing the others. But there can be no excuse or pardon for a systematic disregard of accepted moral rules because they have no understood justification. The only base for judging particular rules is their reconcilability or conflict with the majority of other rules which are generally accepted.

It is certainly sad that men can be made bad by their environment, but this does not alter the fact that they are bad and must be treated as such. The repentant sinner may earn absolution, but so long as he continues breaking the rules of morals he must

remain a less valued member of society. Crime is not necessarily the result of poverty and not excused by environment. There are many poor people much more honest than many rich, and middle-class morals are probably in general better than those of the rich. But morally a person breaking the rules must be counted bad even if he knows no better. And that often people will have much to learn in order to be accepted by another group is much to the good. Even moral praise is not based on intention but on performance and must be so.

*In a culture formed by group selection, the imposition of egalitarianism must stop further evolution.* Egalitarianism is of course not a majority view but a product of the necessity under unlimited democracy to solicit the support even of the worst. And while it is one of the indispensable principles of a free society that we value people differently according to the morality of their manifest conduct, irrespective of the, never fully known, reasons of their failures, egalitarianism preaches that nobody is better than anybody else. The argument is that it is nobody's fault that he is as he is, but that all is the responsibility of 'society'. It is by the slogan that 'it is not your fault' that the demagoguery of unlimited democracy, assisted by a scientific psychology, has come to the support of those who claim a share in the wealth of our society without submitting to the discipline to which it is due. It is not by conceding 'a right to equal concern and respect'<sup>58</sup> to those who break the code that civilization is maintained. Nor can we, for the purpose of maintaining our society, accept all moral beliefs which are held with equal conviction as equally legitimate, and recognize a right to blood feud or infanticide or even theft, or any other moral beliefs contrary to those on which the working of our society rests. What makes an individual a member of society and gives him claims is that he obeys its rules. Wholly contradictory views may give him rights in other societies but not in ours. For the science of anthropology all cultures or morals may be equally good, but we maintain our society by treating others as less so.

Our civilization advances by making the fullest use of the infinite variety of the individuals of the human species, apparently greater than that of any wild animal species,<sup>59</sup> which had generally to adapt to one particular ecological niche. Culture has provided a great variety of cultural niches in which that great diversity of men's innate or acquired gifts can be used. And if we are to make use of the distinct factual knowledge of the individuals

inhabiting different locations on this world, we must allow them to be told by the impersonal signals of the market how they had best use them in their own as well as in the general interest.

It would indeed be a tragic joke of history if man, who owes his rapid advance to nothing so much as to the exceptional variety of individual gifts, were to terminate his evolution by imposing a compulsory egalitarian scheme on all.

*The destruction of indispensable values by scientific error: Freud*

I come finally to what for many years has increasingly become one of my main concerns and causes of apprehension: the progressive destruction of irreplaceable values by scientific error.<sup>60</sup> The attacks do not all come from socialism, although the errors I shall have to consider mostly lead to socialism. It finds support from purely intellectual errors in the associated fields of philosophy, sociology, law and psychology. In the first three fields these errors derive mostly from the Cartesian scientism and constructivism as developed by Auguste Comte.<sup>61</sup> Logical positivism has been trying to show that all moral values are 'devoid of meaning', purely 'emotive'; it is wholly contemptuous of the conception that even emotional responses selected by biological *or* cultural evolution may be of the greatest importance for the coherence of an advanced society. The sociology of knowledge, deriving from the same source, similarly attempts to discredit all moral views by the alleged interested motifs of their defenders.

I must confess here that, however grateful we all must be for some of the descriptive work of the sociologists, for which, however, perhaps anthropologists and historians would have been equally qualified, there seems to me still to exist no more justification for a theoretical discipline of sociology than there would be for a theoretical discipline of naturology apart from the theoretical disciplines dealing with particular classes of natural or social phenomena. I am quite certain, however, that the sociology of knowledge with its desire that mankind should pull itself up by its own bootstraps (a belief characteristically re-asserted now in these very words by the behaviourist B. F. Skinner) has wholly misconceived the process of the growth of knowledge. I have earlier in this work attempted to show why legal positivism, with its belief that every legal rule must be derivable from a conscious act of legislation, and that all conceptions of justice are

the product of particular interests, is conceptually as much mistaken as historically.<sup>62</sup>

But the culturally most devastating effects have come from the endeavour of psychiatrists to cure people by releasing their innate instincts. After having lauded earlier my Viennese friends Popper, Lorenz, Gombrich and Bertalanffy, I am afraid I must now concede that the logical positivism of Carnap and the legal positivism of Kelsen are far from the worst things that have come out of Vienna. Through his profound effects on education, Sigmund Freud has probably become the greatest destroyer of culture. Although in his old age, in his *Civilisation and its Discontents*,<sup>63</sup> he seems himself to have become not a little disturbed by some of the effects of his teaching, his basic aim of undoing the culturally acquired repressions and freeing the natural drives, has opened the most fatal attack on the basis of all civilization. The movement culminated about thirty years ago and the generation grown up since has been largely brought up on its theories. I will give you from that date only one particular crass expression of the fundamental ideas by an influential Canadian psychiatrist who later became the first Secretary General of the World Health Organization. In 1946 the late Dr G. B. Chisholm in a work praised by high American legal authority, advocated

the eradication of the concept of right and wrong which has been the basis of child training, the substitution of intelligent and rational thinking for the faith in the certainties of old people [. . . since] most psychiatrists and psychologists and many other respectable people have escaped from these moral chains and are able to observe and think freely.

In his opinion it was the task of the psychiatrists to free the human race from 'the crippling burden of good and evil' and the 'perverse concepts of right and wrong' and thereby to decide its immediate future.<sup>64</sup>

It is the harvest of these seeds which we are now gathering. Those non-domesticated savages who represent themselves as alienated from something they have never learnt, and even undertake to construct a 'counter-culture', are the necessary product of the permissive education which fails to pass on the burden of culture, and trusts to the *natural instincts which are the instincts of the savage*. It did not surprise me in the least when, according to a report in *The Times*, a recent international con-

ference of senior police officers and other experts acknowledged that a noticeable proportion of today's terrorists have studied sociology or political and educational sciences.<sup>65</sup> What can we expect from a generation who grew up during the fifty years during which the English intellectual scene was dominated by a figure who had publicly pronounced that he always had been and would remain an immoralist?

We must be grateful that before this flood has finally destroyed civilization, a revulsion is taking place even within the field in which it originated. Three years ago Professor Donald Campbell of Northwestern University, in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association on 'The Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution', said that

if, as I assert, there is in psychology today a general background assumption that the human impulses provided by biological evolution are right and optimal, both individually and socially, and that repressive or inhibitory moral traditions are wrong, then in my judgment this assumption may now be regarded as scientifically wrong from the enlarged scientific perspective that comes from the joint consideration of population genetics and social system evolution. . . . Psychology may be contributing to the undermining of the retention of what may be extremely valuable, social-evolutionary inhibitory systems which we do not yet fully understand.<sup>66</sup>

And he added a little later: 'the recruitment of scholars into psychology and psychiatry may be such as to select persons unusually eager to challenge the cultural orthodoxy'.<sup>67</sup> From the furore this lecture caused<sup>68</sup> we can judge how deeply embedded these ideas still are in contemporary psychological theory. There are similar salutary efforts by Professor Thomas Szasz of Syracuse University<sup>69</sup> and by Professor H. J. Eysenck in this country.<sup>70</sup> So all hope is not yet lost.

### *The tables turned*

If our civilization survives, which it will do only if it renounces those errors, I believe men will look back on our age as an age of superstition, chiefly connected with the names of Karl Marx and Sigmund

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Freud. I believe people will discover that the most widely held ideas which dominated the twentieth century, those of a planned economy with a just distribution, a freeing ourselves from repressions and conventional morals, of permissive education as a way to freedom, and the replacement of the market by a rational arrangement of a body with coercive powers, were all based on superstitions in the strict sense of the word. An age of superstitions is a time when people imagine that they know more than they do. In this sense the twentieth century was certainly an outstanding age of superstition, and the cause of this is an overestimation of what science has achieved – not in the field of the comparatively simple phenomena, where it has of course been extraordinarily successful, but in the field of complex phenomena, where the application of the techniques which proved so helpful with essentially simple phenomena has proved to be very misleading.

Ironically, these superstitions are largely an effect of our inheritance from the Age of Reason, that great enemy of all that *it* regarded as superstitions. If the Enlightenment has discovered that the role assigned to human reason in intelligent construction had been too small in the past, we are discovering that the task which our age is assigning to the rational construction of new institutions is far too big. What the age of rationalism – and modern positivism – has taught us to regard as senseless and meaningless formations due to accident or human caprice, turn out in many instances to be the foundations on which our capacity for rational thought rests. *Man is not and never will be the master of his fate: his very reason always progresses by leading him into the unknown and unforeseen where he learns new things.*

In concluding this epilogue I am becoming increasingly aware that it ought not to be that but rather a new beginning. But I hardly dare hope that for me it can be so.