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INTRODUCTION

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Tagore's philosophical achievements lie in three major directions : (a) defending his belief that we live in a "Man's Universe", or a world interpreted basically by human categories; (b) formulation of a concept of man as transcendence, or as he put it "Man is an Angle of surplus"; and (c) working out a theory of knowledge by which man can be said to know the world as he finds it as a man.

In the present context I shall deal with the concept of man with special relation to the problem of alienation.

II

The term "alienation" has a variety of uses, social, political, legal and philosophical. But there is a common factor or a generalised meaning of the concept, given currency by Hegel in the West, in which the term implies an undesirable state of affairs, a fall from one's real essence. That notion is by no means sufficiently transparent, and its opacity has to be put up with for some while till we can spell out the specific sense in which we would like to employ the concept. Let me make two initial presuppositions. One, that the word "alienation" is used in a pejorative sense, that it is an evaluative notion, and secondly that it is used in a judgement about a person. If this be so, then to say that someone is alienated is to make an evaluative assessment concerning the person's loss of or fall from his real essence, and thereby an expression is given to the undesirability of the state of affairs in which the

person is mapped. A model of alienation statements would be 'x is alienated' where the value of the variable x would be a human person. Alienation-statements are a sub-class of the class of value judgements, and that such a judgement could be made presupposes that both the person and the maker of the judgement are members of a nonsolipsistic universe.

Now what is it for a person to be alienated? One may be alienated from one's fellow-men from God, from one's society, and above all, from oneself. I say 'above all' because self-alienation of man is the generalised meaning of the concept of our concern, and depending on one's concept of the self of man the phenomenon of self-alienation may include one or the other of the varieties of alienation. What does one mean when one uses the word 'I'? There is a sense of the word 'I' which may be conveniently called transcendental. The transcendental or the philosophical self of a man is referred to, for example, when one says 'I ought to have done such-and-such'. In using such expressions one does represent to himself a notion of his ideal self, contrasted with another portrait of him. The man who performs an action and the man who judges his own action are not of the same order of being. 'I', the judge, and 'I' the doer stand on two different levels, otherwise the judgement 'I ought..... etc.' could never be made. The judgement is an act of reflection, a higher order function of the self, referring to its performance on a lower level.

Granted that we do have the notion of an ideal self of ours, the question will arise how do we come to have the concept

of the self or its awareness, and what is its nature ? The 'I' referred to by the first person pronoun cannot be identified by the body he has. The 'I' is an embodied being, though not identical with it. It transcends its body. What does it mean to transcend one's own body ? Let us look at the matter a little more closely. The property of having a body is a predicate true of the 'I', just as to say 'I am so-and-so' is to affirm a predicate of the 'I'. But the statement 'I am so-and-so' is not a definition, because in a definition the definiens and the definiendum are of identical truth-value. This leads us to say that the 'I' or the concept of the self is essentially indefinable¹ because, no predicate or a set of predicates can exhaust the descriptive content of the self. A phenomenological confirmation of this matter of logic can be had in our constant refusal to be identified with any statements that may be true of ourselves. There is always a residue, something left over by whatever has been spoken of the self. Similarly, the 'I' is an embodied self, that someone is embodied is a fact of his being, but he is not a fact. Linguistic self-affirmation can only take the form of an analytic assertion like 'I am that I am', and to make some such assertion is in effect to say nothing significant. And this is the paradox of man's self-awareness. Man accepts a set of predicates, descriptively true of him, and he refuses to take the set of descriptive statements as constituting his identity.² There is a feeling of mystery of existence, an awareness of unboundedness almost a rebellious conviction that he cannot be adequately described. Description may be either true or false, and when it is true it delimits the object till the object described and the set

of descriptive statements are identical in import. Man is indescribable, because he is a person, and descriptive phrases are typical. No person can be reduced to being an instance of a type. A person is a unique centre of existence. He does have a spatio-temporal dimension, which he transcends every time a descriptive predicate is affirmed to be true of him.

There is another reason why a person cannot be exhaustively defined. Because he is not an object. Only an object can be exhaustively known, it can be located in the scheme of things, and to do so is to comprehend it under a set of definite relationship that it might bear to other objects of the world. A man, who is a person, does stand or enter into definite relationships with other individuals, but he can change them. Persons in relation are society, but again, 'being in relation' is a descriptive predicate, and should the description be taken as constituting a man's identity, and he does not protest, then he is *essentially* a social being. That man is a class social being is a fact, and as partial a truth as saying that he is a political being. No commitment, social, political or otherwise, can define man's multidimensional mode of existence. To speak conversely, to identify a person with one of his dimensions to take any or even a set of predicates to be exhaustively true of him is to depersonalise him, to reduce him to a state of facts, to a static condition, that is, to turn him into an object. And an object alone can be defined by a set of predicative statements. Whether one should accept being treated as objects, i.e., endorsing the set of statements as

exhaustively describing him is a matter for decision.

Why it is a matter for decision will be immediately clear. Man is a person, and he does not exist in a vacuum. He is individuated by the relations he bears to others. The domain of the 'others' is a structural group like society, state, the political party, definite personal relationships and so on. Man, in fact, finds himself in his relations with others. But in this state of his all that he is ? To withhold one's allegiance to one's political party for instance, is a refusal to accept a particular predicate. But such a state of affairs is inconceivable in which man refuses every predicate asserted of him as true. Our roles are not always compulsory. We very often choose them. We may have this or that role, but we cannot have no role at all. To have no role to play is to exit from the drama of life.

Now, man must play his roles, to play one's roles is to endorse a definite description as true of him, but not exhaustively. For a man to accept his role in life as definite and exhaustive spelling of his personal identity, is to court boredom, sustained by a loss of creative dynamism. The import of the last statement will be immediately clear.

If by 'man' we understand, as Tagore does, a person who always transcends descriptions of himself, a dynamic conscious mode of existence with a lion on his unbound possibilities, and should this be the real nature of man, to endorse that one is identical, or exhaustively definable in terms of one's roles or

descriptions is to reduce oneself to the status of an object, to admit one's finiteness, non-spiritual delimited existence of facthood. But man is not finite, and that is proved by man's aspirations, his adventures, inventiveness, restless curiosity, questioning Nature and his attempts to conquer her, his rebellions. Given the concept of Man, as Tagore puts it, that Man is an 'Angel of Surplus', 'alienation' would mean the state of losing one's domain of possibilities, to be reduced to fact.

In Tagore's philosophy 'fact' is contrasted with 'Truth', by which he understands 'harmony'. 'Harmony' is an aesthetic concept, a value, which is something to be achieved, it is something not to be found as a fact as one finds a pebble on the seashore. Harmony is something to be actively or volitionally created, by drawing upon man's domain of possibilities. Man's civilization itself is a continuous process of self-defining, his infinite can never be exhausted, no state of progress, no stage of civilisation reached by mankind is final, though every age of civilisation is a partial answer to his self-exploration. The musical analogy brings out man's essential creative nature, human truth is always in the making, partially attained and thereby transcended also. There is a whole family of concepts designatory of the nature of man, besides truth or harmony, they are Love, Freedom and Creativity. 'Alienation' then means bondage, and loss of creative urge in living.

Real existence is creative, and to live is to enter into human relationships. Man's most volitional or rational

activities are utilitarian, scientific in the narrow sense of the word. It is tailored to utility. But the artist in man, or for that matter, the real man delights in non-utility. Facts are the concern of utility, truth is the delight of art. In our everyday engagements we adopt the utilitarian attitude towards other men, they are branded with roles, and tied to definite descriptions. In encountering a man we ask what is he ? - demanding a predicate, and if he satisfies that description, we feel no more interest in him. From this point of view there is no difference in knowing a man, and knowledge of a fact or an object like a table or a chair. In this way of knowing a man identifying him with his roles, we ignore him as a person, who transcends descriptions of him or at least, who tries to transcend it. In one sense, scientific mode of knowing could be said to be knowing things under a category, as instances of universals, typical examples, their concepts being definable in terms of descriptive predicates. For practical purposes this may be all right. But there cannot be a Science of Man, since as man is not an object or a fact, he represents a truth, and hence in order that a man may be known as a person, we must be aided by some other faculty of knowing. The attempt to know man in the way we know objects in science is a rationalistic fallacy, which only results in alienation of capitalistic society.

Knowledge of persons calls for a distinct epistemology. Tagore's formulation of Imagination as a kind of non-evidential, or non-factual knowledge merits a closer examination than I can afford now. But it seems to me to mark a definite advance upon

the Romantics' search for such a faculty. Kant's non-committal admission of the reflective judgement, and a better answer than the existentialists' basic dismay about the possibility of knowing other-selves.

The problem of our knowledge of other-selves is a stumbling-block to any epistemology. Rationally such knowledge could at best be inferential, for we do not have direct access to others' minds or mental stages. Again, solipsism is an untenable position, though perhaps logically irrefutable. But that we live in a non-solipsistic universe is obvious, and if it is so, how do we know the other person? We cannot know persons as we do know objects in science. Reason does not help us here. But the moral concern about our knowledge of other selves is so pressing that we cannot suspend the question either. Philosophers like Kant and the existentialists have thought of calling other aspects of man, like his emotive and volitional powers, to aid. Tagore's contribution in philosophy lies in formulating a theory of knowledge on the basis of man's emotive and conative life as a means of overcoming alienation on two levels, self-alienation by creativity, and inter personal alienation by actively participating in life and transforming class-based society into a harmony of persons. And the harmony of persons is nowhere better realised than in human love. Love is the greatest human truth.

1. *The indefinability thesis needs further elaboration. Two points may be made in the present context. Exact concepts can be defined in a manner unavailable for inexact concepts like*

'good'. Definitions in terms of a person's role in class-society are ossifying inasmuch as they purport to deny his individual uniqueness. A person can be defined in the sense of identifying a member of a human situation with a view to recognizing his self-transcending nature. Tagore's critique of bourgeoisie culture revolts against treating the term 'man' as if it were an exact concept, or for that matter, holding a man identical with the description of his role in class-society. This is ossifying anthropology.

- 2. The appellation of descriptive predicates to a person fails to take account of man as an agent, a conative organizer of state of affairs.*