

Dharma, Society and Political Order

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Whenever the issue of creating, sustaining and safeguarding order in society is raised, the tradition of Western thinking gives one unequivocal answer. It identifies the political system as not only creator of order, but also its guardian and protector when the unruly crowd of passions rises in open rebellion against the harsh rule of the soul and when, as a result of this, order in society is threatened with disruption. Plato recommends the creation of a political order that he calls republic as the panacea capable of saving man from the adverse consequences of disorder. In his view, there is no other agency than the state that can work as the surrogate of order and release man from the slavery of his turbulent passions. Social order does not enter into his reckoning. Even Aristotle assigns the responsibility of transforming the individual into a citizen not to society but to the public realm, that is, the realm of politics.

This tradition of thinking continues uninterrupted even in modern times. In contradistinction to the state, society is considered to be the arena where diverse socio-economic interests compete for articulation, ascendance and control. By virtue of this, society comes to be divided into competing, heterogeneous groups and is transformed into a conflict system. If the conflict that ensues as a result of the aggressive pursuit of interest by different socio-economic interests is allowed to rage unabatedly, order is likely to be jeopardized. The pacification of conflict by settlement, through negotiations, bargaining and compromise, of disputes caused by different claims of entitlement, is supposed to be beyond the capacity of society. It cannot, therefore, provide any framework of integration of diverse socio-economic interests; it is only the state that can provide such a framework.

It is not, therefore, surprising that, influenced by this perspective, Voegelin insists that the creation of a political order 'is an essay in world creation', that constitutes 'the little world of order'. Such an order is

carved out of 'a shapeless vastness of conflicting human desires' and leads 'a precarious life under the pressure of destructive forces from within and without, and maintaining its existence by the ultimate threat and application of violence against the internal breaker of its laws as well as the external aggressor'.¹ The use of violence, however, is instrumental only for the preservation of order, what Voegelin calls the *cosmion*; its real function is 'the creation of shelter in which man may give to his life a semblance of meaning'.² The meaning of what constitutes the essence of being human cannot be derived from the givens of life of a natural man nor that of society and nature. If the life of the natural man is considered to be meaningful in and by itself, then, it proves to be disruptive of order both in human psyche and in the society at large.

To consider the givens of man, that is, the natural man, society and nature as immutable, is to endow the finiteness of human existence with the quality of the absolute. As a result of this, corporate life is likely to face a variety of problems that must be solved if man is to survive the life of a natural man and maintain his continued existence in history against the hazards that the act of living presents. It is to solve these problems that the little world of order, or the *cosmion*, is created. Once it comes into being, this little world has to live and work in particular historical conditions which may snap the fragile thread of its existence. It is in this sense that, even while the *cosmion*, the little world of order, aims at creating permanent structure of order backed by necessary rules and force, is itself nothing more than a finite world. Yet this little world of order aims at endowing human existence with absoluteness of meaning. It is in this sense that, as Schaar points out:

Political life occupies a middle terrain between the sheer givens of nature and society on the one hand, and the transcendental ends towards which men aspire, on the other. Political action is that type of action through which men publicly attempt to transform the givens of nature and society in the light of values which are above or outside the order of the givens.³

The state constitutes this middle terrain between the sheer givens of nature and society that give a definite shape to human existence and certain transcendental values above or outside the givens of nature and society. As such, it has necessarily to deal, on the one hand, with the diversity of human nature with its diverse and not necessarily compatible requirements, hopes and expectations. On the other hand, it is assigned the responsibility of holding different kinds of human beings located in a highly differentiated factual order in some framework of unity. Also, it is responsible for preventing them from breaking those norms,

rules and laws that are essential for ensuring collective good, both, negatively, by meting out punishment for infringing these norms and, positively, through inculcating respect for these norms and rules. It is in this sense that the state possesses the dual character of combining power with authority, and force with morality. The historical existence of the state is always threatened with the chaos caused, internally, by the rebellion of appetites and, externally, by powerful rulers driven by the ambition of acquiring ever more territory. The state has, therefore, to take recourse to violence in order to ward off the danger of chaos, if gentler methods fail to have any effect. But apart from this, the authority that the state exercises over the people it claims to rule within its given territory must have a moral force and be grounded in something that is over or outside particular wills.

In addition to this duality, there is yet another feature of the state that allows it to be seen in a double light. It is true that the birth of the state is due largely to human cupidity. The state is thus considered to be a providential check upon human cupidity. However, the state is also a power-machine meant to be used exclusively by the state to maintain its existence as well as to preserve the integrity of the created order. Yet, precisely because it signifies a power-machine, it tends to be used by powerful socio-economic interests for preserving and protecting their privileged position and, towards this, prevent the weaker sections of the society from using the state power for a similar purpose against superior forces of wealth, power and privilege. It is in this sense that, as Unger points out, 'the state is seen in a double light, as the providential alternative to the blindness of human cupidity and as a supreme weapon of some men in their self-interested struggle against others'.⁴

It does not need to be pointed out that the perception of the state in this double light is due mainly to the perilous divide in modern times between reason and will creating in its wake yet another divide, that between the private and the public. Given the primacy of the satisfaction of desires as a means of ensuring happiness, sustaining the process of self-making of man and supporting civilizational progress, freedom in modern times signifies the lack of heteronomy, the conception of what is right is reduced to the notion of what is good. As a result of this reduction, the good has no existence outside the will. It is true that the will that decides what is good is supposed to function under the suzerainty of reason. However, for various reasons, both will and reason move on parallel tracks with only infrequent interactions. This is so because, as Kant points out, man is a citizen of two kingdoms, a natural realm of causal determination and a moral realm of freedom. As a citizen of the

former, he wants to explain and understand the world for effective action; he must reside in the later so that he can justify his conduct both in his own eyes and in the eyes of his fellowmen. Kant did claim that a moral law rather than the caprice of the will must take the place of natural determination. However, he was unable to forge an effective bridge between the universality of reason and the particularism of the will.

The fact, however, remains that reason plays only a subsidiary role and is treated by the will as its hand-maiden. As such, 'reason cannot command us to choose a course of action simply because it is worthy of being chosen nor can it prohibit us from settling on some new aim for our activities. Its industry in the service of desire is indispensable, but limited. The limit is the line that divides the elucidation of relations among desires from the decision about what in the end to choose'.⁵ The distinction, made especially in modern times, between knowledge and will is at the root of the erosion of the morality of reason. In Pande's words:

The modern distinction, in fact, arises from the distinction between knowledge and will, the latter being free to follow any fiat within the bounds of desire and impulse which are regarded as non-rational. On this view, the will becomes arbitrary or non-rationally determined and thus the principles it follows cease to have any connection with reason just as the latter remains connected only with directive principle of the will.⁶

In view of the fact that it is the private concerns of individuals that constitute the woof and warp of politics, the state, too, does not remain immune to the influences of politics that receives its inspiration from the interplay of private passions. It is true that the state is viewed as an association which, unlike other associations in society, is considered to be something above the antagonism and strife of private values. It can also be argued that the state is simply a framework within which antagonistic interests are represented and their conflicts resolved. However, it does not alter the fact that the state, insofar as it has the responsibility of providing as well as safeguarding the integrity of the rules of the game which must be followed while private interests are vigorously pursued by individuals and groups. These rules must be above the competition of private interests and must not be determined by particular or a particular combination of private interests. It is also true that the state is distinguished from other associations on the basis of the distinction between laws of the state and rules prescribed and enforced by other associations. However, this distinction is prone to frequent

breakdowns. The government, as Unger observes, 'takes on the characteristics of a private body because private interests are the only interests that exist in a situation of which it is a part. Thus the state is like the gods in Olympics, who were banished from the earth and endowed with super-human powers, but condemned to undergo the passions of the mortal'.⁷

Thus, the state, even while it is supposed to be above the competition and strife of private values, its existential situation forces it to act frequently as a private body. It must be emphasized that the state becomes indispensable because most individuals are incapable of controlling and curbing the erratic movement of their desires, appetites and passions. This is symptomatic of their inability to exercise control over their passions; that is, it is indicative of the fact that these individuals have already undergone the process of the erosion of auto-control. This further indicates the fact that they have lost the power to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong and what is good for the individual and what is good for all individuals. Since there are no conceptions of the good that stand above the conflicts of private values and impose limits on the tendency of the individual towards self-aggrandizement, artificial limits on this tendency have to be imposed by some outside agency. This agency is considered to be none other than the state which must legislate laws or, alternatively, apply rules framed on the basis of some transcendental source and see to it that these laws or rules are obeyed.

The fact, however, remains that the heat of the pursuit of self-interest dissolves respect for the law. To the extent that this happens, the legitimacy of the state as the providential alternative to human cupidity faces severe erosion. The state has, therefore, to safeguard and ensure its legitimacy and seek to restore respect for the law by a recourse to violence. But the extensive use of violence by the state to ensure conformity to the law creates its own paradox. As the reliance of the state on the use of force increases, the legitimacy of its claim to rule by virtue of the authority. However, the very fact that the state is forced to use its power resources frequently is indicative of its sagging authority. This, in turn, is symptomatic of the widespread erosion of the respect for the law in the society at large indicating further that the loss of auto-control on the part of individual members of the society has become an established fact.

It is interesting to note that the tradition of Indian thinking attributes the erosion of the auto-control in the individual and the onset of good or bad times to the ruler. The aphorism that *raja kalasya karanam*

(the king is responsible for good or bad times) points just to this. This does not, however, mean that the upward or downward swing in the movement of time is due to the slackening of governmental control over the people and the weakening of governmental fiat. When the state is forced to exercise stricter control over the people it indicates a deeper malaise, that is, the erosion of the commitment to moral conduct on the part of the people, particularly the leaders or great men (*mahajana* or *spudaios* in Aristotle's word), that is, persons who set the pattern of ideal conduct.⁸ It is only when the leaders of society, who are considered to be the exemplars of good conduct, stray away from it that society becomes afflicted with the difficult-to-cure disease of corruption of its ideals and exemplary conduct. Thus, the source of the corruption of society is always to be found at its apex—the apex occupied by its *mahajanas* or *spudaios*. And if the ruler, who happens to be the *spudaios* among *spudaios*, strays away from the path of virtue or right conduct, the condition of the people he rules over must degrade and become miserable.

It is against this background that we can appreciate the fact that the act of governance cannot be the basis of the principle governing its functioning; this act has to be subordinated to some higher principle. This principle, as we have already seen,⁹ is what is known as *kshatrasya kshatram*, that is, *dharma*. This being the case, it is quite clear that *dharma* is a higher principle that is above the state and constitutes the source from which the state does or can derive those principles that should guide and regulate its functioning. Thus, the legitimacy of *regnum* depends on the extent to which it conforms to these principles in discharging its responsibilities and using force in securing conformity to law. In being guided by *dharma* while discharging his responsibilities, the ruler discharges his duty of upholding *dharma*. The saying that *dharmo rakshite rakshitah* (when *dharma* is upheld, well-being of every being is ensured) points to just this essential aspect of the act of governance. Even violence used by the state to uphold the order of *dharma* can be justified only if the state accepts and conforms to *dharma*.

It is true that upholding the order of *dharma* is the primary responsibility of the state. This responsibility can be discharged well only if the state is guided in its actions by and accepts *dharma* as its *adhiraja*. However, this is only a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition. The state cannot be effective in upholding the order of *dharma* if this order has either eroded in the society at large or has no meaning in managing the pragmatic affairs of the people. It is, therefore, necessary that people are committed to, respect and give allegiance to *dharma* in

handling the problems of personal life and social existence. The social world, without the restraining hand of *dharma*, easily becomes the breeding ground of exploitation and oppression leading to the onset of *matsya nyaya*. Social life and relations must, therefore, be informed and regulated by *dharma*. Since social life and relations are, to a large extent, reflections of actions on the part of individual members of society aimed at fulfilling their various needs related both to their worldly existence and transcendental purposes, it is necessary that their various needs related both to their worldly existence and transcendental purposes, it is necessary that their conduct, too, reflect their devotion to and obedience of *dharma*.

What kind of social order, we must ask, can prove effective in providing the much needed benign shelter to the people struggling to find a reliable anchor for the ship of their life tossed around in the seething and surging sea of everydayness? To answer this question satisfactorily, we must make a distinction between three kinds of social order based on easily identifiable different principles of organization and modes of operation. The first to be mentioned in the regard is the one which is viewed scientifically, not philosophically.¹⁰ Viewed scientifically, the universe is considered to be the concourse of causal relations: these relations can be studied only by using the methods of the natural sciences. The heavy reliance on the methods of the natural sciences came to be placed because of the radical shift in the world view that occurred in the seventeenth century in Western Europe. The main thrust of this shift was to reject the idea of man as an integral part of a larger conceptual order; as such, man was not a self-defining subject but a person who derived his norms and values from the larger conceptual order. This order was considered to be the bedrock of his knowledge and understanding of himself and the world around him. Central to this world view was the notion of intelligible essence, that is, the form that, by becoming embodied in matter, lends each being its unique pattern of development and distinctive identity.

The rejection of the notion of intelligible essence had far-reaching consequences for man and his relationship with the external world. This rejection, as Rosen points out, transformed actuality into possibility.¹¹ If objects lack intelligible essence, that is, if their development is not governed by what is embedded in their own being, then, it is shaped by their environing conditions. Actuality, then, is not manifested or actualized potentiality; is simply a possibility. In other words, the possibility of a particular object being shaped in a desired fashion opens up. But the possibility unfolds in history and incorporates

a sequence of changes leading from one level of achievement, capacity and refinement to even higher and higher levels. In this spiraling process man's individual and social life, it is assumed, could undergo almost unlimited change, a radically new order of social relationships could be established, and in this new order there could be fundamental transformation in human nature.¹²

When actuality is transformed into possibility, form is submitted to the agency of the two closely related powers: temporality or history and human will. Virtue now consists in the satisfaction of desires which becomes possible with the help of science and technology. With this change in the world view, a new perspective on man and his world came to dominate man's thinking. As Beeker puts it:

We necessarily look upon our world from the point of view of history and from the point of view of science. Viewed historically, it appears to be something in the making, something which can at best be only tentatively understood since it is not yet finished. Viewed scientifically, it is something to be manipulated and mastered, something to adjust ourselves to which the less possible stress. So long as, we can make efficient use of things, we feel no irresistible need to understand them.¹³

In the world, viewed both historically as well as scientifically, knowledge must produce concrete results. As Descartes explains:

In the place of speculative philosophy taught in the schools we can have a practical philosophy, by means of which, knowing the forces and the actions of fire, water, air, of the stars, of the heavens, and of all the bodies that surrounded us—knowing them as distinctly as we know the various crafts of the artisans—we may in the same fashion employ them in all the uses for which they are suited, thus rendering ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.¹⁴

And if man wanted to become 'the masters and possessors of nature', then, nature has to be read in the language it is written. This language is of course, mathematics. And since natural sciences have devised methods of reading the nature in the language it is written, science has obtained impressive results. The successes of the natural sciences must, therefore, be attributed, at least in part, to mathematical or quasi-mathematical methods they have employed. As such, the acceptance of such methods as paradigmatic and the application of them in social sciences would result in comparable achievements. This assumption has led to another, more dangerous, assumption that a study of reality could qualify as scientific only if it used the methods of the natural sciences. This further means that subject matters studied by 'non-

scientific' procedures are either illusionary, that is simply non-existent or, then, at least capable of being transformed or reduced into suitable forms for scientific analysis.

Now, if the methods used by the natural sciences are to be used in studying society, the procedures employed to study social reality must be objective through a methodologically rigorous exclusion of all value judgements. The exclusion of all value judgements is felt to be necessary because they are supposed to express only individual preferences and decisions and are, therefore, subjective. As such, only propositions concerning facts of the phenomenal world could count as being objective and, therefore, scientific. For one respectable perspective on value-free science, a perspective elaborated by Max Weber, it meant an exploration of the causality of actions by means of ideal types. Weber's scientific analysis could not say whether it was better to be Marxist revolutionary or a liberal constitutionalist, to be sure; but it could indicate what the consequences would be if someone tried to translate his value preferences into action. For, Weber, the task of science with respect to 'demonic' values was to make men aware of the consequences of their actions and to awaken in them a sense of responsibility. But Weber was unable to resolve the problems that this perspective gave rise to. The most difficult problem concerned the fact that if the values were truly demonic, there was 'no reason, why anyone should wake up to responsibility, particularly when they fall back upon what Weber himself identified as an 'ethics of intention' that dismissed the problem of consequences altogether'.¹⁵

Needless to say that the fact-value divide that is the hall-mark of modern social analysis is, of course, the product of the modern idea of what man is. As a bundle of desires, man can expect to be happy and realize the potentialities implanted in his breast only if he fulfills his needs as a natural being by obeying the dictates of his desires. It is true that as a rational man, he can control and regulate the erratic movement of his desires. However, while reason is universal and its endowment universal, it is only instrumental, calculative reasoning concerned primarily with the calculation of means for ends determined by the will. As Unger points out: "

Understanding contributes to the organization of our goals by clarifying their interrelation, but it never ultimately determines their substance. Reason is an formal in the performance of its moral responsibilities as it is in the development of scientific truth. The substance of our goals is the object of arbitrary will just as the substance of material phenomena is left

by science to the realm of our everyday sense impressions.¹⁶

The dichotomy of universal reason and arbitrary desires creates another dichotomy, that between means and ends. Given the privacy of the need to satisfy desires, the determination of what these desires are, which desires to satisfy and how to go about it—all these considerations are subjective and subject to the preferences of the will. It is true that the means to an end is the activity of understanding and, as such, it is supposed to be an objective act. It is also true that the choice of the ends themselves is the work of desire and, therefore, arbitrary. However, the role of reason is limited only to 'reckoning'; it is reduced to the status of practical, prudential reason responsible for intelligent calculation of how to encompass ends and means which are themselves beyond the arbitration of reason. It is in this sense that reason serves as the hand-maiden of the will.¹⁷ As a consequences of the downgrading of reason, everything in the world is considered to be potentially an object of appetite or aversion. But whatever the individual does not seek or fear as an end is important to him only as a possible means. In this perspective, the external world, both society and nature, is treated as potential means for realizing individual purposes.

To treat the external world simply as potential means for realizing individual purposes has several important consequences for man's relationship with his envioning social and natural world. First, if the individual is to prove effective in realizing his self-determined purposes, he must be able to represent things clearly taking into account comparative costs and benefits of various alternative means of attaining of given end.¹⁸ The power to plan and execute is thus the hall-mark of man in modern times. This presupposes and attitude of disengagement towards the external world. To look for significance in the external world is to circumscribe one's ability and willingness to use and manipulate the outer world for realizing one's purposes. To be disengaged is a necessary condition not only for implementing projects but also for safeguarding freedom. As Taylor points out, 'To be able to look on everything, world and society in this perspective would be to neutralize its significance and this would be a kind of freedom—the freedom of the self-defining subject who determines his own purpose, or finds them in his natural desires.'¹⁹

Second, the primacy of the satisfaction of desires as the stepping-stone to the good life of modern conception has thrown the pursuit of higher life purposes to the dust-bin of history. As a result, the fulfillment of ordinary life-needs involved with the process of acquiring wealth,

power and prestige has assumed a central importance in man's life. But even the satisfaction of ordinary life-needs requires a rational control even while rationality is mass calculated to mean only prudence and subjugated to the overlordship of the will. However, as a reaction to Enlightenment, ordinary life-needs have themselves been endowed with higher significance and their realization is considered essential for the full flowering of man's potentialities. As Taylor puts it:

To fulfill the true impulse of nature in us is not just to meet biological needs but also to satisfy a higher aspiration. It is, at the same time, a more fulfillment. From Rousseau on, the true 'voice of nature' is at one and the same time both the impulse of biological needs and an aspiration to what is experienced as moral self-realization.²⁰

From this perspective, the notion of life according to nature involves a fusion of the biological and the moral obliterating the hierarchical ordering as was the case with traditional moralities, or their setting in a relation of rational control that is implied in Enlightenment perspective. What is interesting to note is that the fulfillment of ordinary life-needs is not only instrumental in securing happiness and promoting personality development as well as facilitating civilizational progress. It has also helped create and sustain an industrial consumer society supposedly endowed with the capacity to deliver all the goods necessary for sustaining life, safeguarding liberty, and facilitating the pursuit of happiness. All this does not only mean the meeting of certain quantitative targets but also the realization of the individuals, status as autonomous, rational agent. For the sustenance of this status, continued accumulation is necessary but destructive, as we shall see shortly, of morality, social harmony and ecological balance. However, it bespeaks of a consistent, disciplined maintenance of instrumental stance to things, as well as the realization of what is erroneously called man's spiritual dimension.

It is true that this perspective on man and his world denies the existence of any transcendental reality other than the phenomenal world and the life and relations of natural man in it. However, it does not mean that this world lacks any order. The order that this dedivinized world is supposed to display is that one discovers in a machine, such as, a clock.²¹ This mechanical order is not accounted for in terms of ideas but in terms of a set of interlocking elements whose relations can be explained in terms of efficient causation. As Taylor points out:

The order (as against disorder) in things does not consist in their embodying ideas, but rather in their meshing without conflict and

distortion. Applied to the human realm, this means that man comes to realize natural order when the company of desiring subjects comes to achieve full satisfaction (happiness), each compatibly with all the others. Perfect harmony is the goal which nature and reason prescribe to men.²²

And, lastly, the perspective delineated above represents what Iris Murdoch calls the 'broken totality'; it manifests itself in splits within man himself, between man and society, and between man and nature. Reason, as we have already seen, is unable to mend this 'broken totality'. It can, however, be argued that even a society reflecting the mechanical conception of order still retains some measure of culture which can exert some sobering influence on the wayward movement of desires. But here, again, we encounter a great difficulty. Culture, in modern times, has, for all practical purposes, lost its intellectual, chiefly educational, vaguely prescriptive and, above all, the evaluative significance.²³

The transmutation of culture is due to the rise into prominence of *homo economicus* who must use his power to force nature to yield her hidden treasures to man who can use these treasures to satisfy his needs. It is by satisfying his needs that man launches the process of his self-making.²⁴ In this process, man develops his capacities, creates institutions and culture, and makes history. While the material artifacts that man creates in this process signifies civilization, non-material artifacts, such as 'knowledge, belief, art, moral law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' is characterized as culture.²⁵ On this view, culture is not a matter of personal cultivation, but that of the productive system that injects, through changes in the economic realm, ever larger doses of change in society. It is clear, then, that culture itself has no intrinsic core of its own which retains its singularity, as Herder argues, but is only an artifact of changes, especially economic change, going on in any social system. As such, culture evolves in history, its particular stages signifying different levels of civilizational progress. Each of these stages denotes, perhaps, a structurally inter-related whole unified by some inner principle. If this principle, which is by no means autonomous, changes, so does culture.

When culture enjoys no autonomous status and loses its educative, evaluative and prescriptive value and is reduced simply to the status of entertainment, society, too, loses its disciplining role and emerges simply as an arena where different persons and groups pursue their private concerns. With all the disciplining, controlling and regulating elements in society losing their salience, the tendency inherent in individuals

and groups towards self-aggrandizement gains an upper hand. It is claimed that the political order is capable of coping with the threats of the disruption of the fragile bonds of order. However, what be emphasized is the fact that order, as already pointed out, signifies only equilibrium that antagonistic socio-economic forces come to achieve in the process of reciprocal resistance. However, order as equilibrium always tends to be disturbed by the activities of individual and groups aimed at safeguarding and promoting their interest. When order is threatened with disruption, the process of negotiation, bargaining and compromise is initiated and contenders are induced to cease their hostilities after partial satisfaction of their claims. However, this does not prove effective. The contenders bide for time and renew their hostilities when the time appears propitious to them. Also, other socio-economic interests, too, are prompted to channel their demands into the political system and take political action to press for their satisfaction.

It is obvious, then, that order in its mechanical sense does not reflect any *a priori* idea of order against which the state of order can be evaluated and judged. Neither does it incorporate any idea of justice. In this perspective, order is simply a possibility, ever evolving; its character is determined by the comparative power positions of the contending socio-economic interests. As such, power displaces the substantive notion of justice and becomes the determinant of who gets what, when and how. It does not need to be pointed out that order and its maintenance or disruption, depend essentially on the extent to which rebellion of desires is or can be pacified. The state cannot pacify it because it is capable only of taking care of the consequences of the rebellion of desires; it cannot limit or abolish altogether man's desires. The rebellion of desires takes place in man's interior. When it does take place and disorder ensues, mind, as Freud notes, ceases to be a peacefully self-contained unity. A prudent superior class is, then, needed to restore the unity of mind.²⁶ If the disorder in man's interior persists, it pervades society and makes it diseased. A diseased society can destroy a man's soul because 'the disorder of society is a disease in the psyche of its members'.²⁷ And a diseased society can become healthy if it is capable of curbing and curing the disorder of the soul, *nosos*. A society can succeed in doing so if it recaptures its full significance as an entity as the guardian of man's psyche. How can it be done? What kind of society is or can prove capable of it?

It should be quite clear by now that what is distinctive about the perspective on society we have been discussing is its treatment of society as something external to man. But the very assumption that society is

external to man, that is, its ontological status as an external world, is questionable. Relegating society to the status of an external world it is further assumed that it exhibits a uniform and homogeneous structure which can be fruitfully studied by using the methods of the natural sciences. In order to lend precision to analysis and acquire predictive quality for the result of the analysis, the complexity of society engendered by the varieties of human nature it contains within its ambit and the variation in its structure in time and space is totally ruled out of court. As a result, the crucial question of the relevance of the image of society disconcealed by the methods of the natural sciences remains unanswered.

It must be emphasized that when society is assumed to be an external world, it is attributed with being and existence apart from the being and existence of individuals it is composed of but, as Pande argues, it is only the individual that has being and distinct existence; society cannot be imagined to have its own being. It signifies the totality of all the individuals that compose it; its character is formed and determined by the nature of its members.²⁸ Human nature is varied and diverse; it is as a result of the diversity of human nature that congeals into different types of society in time and space. Given the variety of human nature, the most important question that needs to be answered concerns the coherence and significance of the social order in weaving the resistant diversity into a benign unity. As we have already seen, if the essential nature of man is conceived in terms only of a natural man, society loses its significance as well as its coherence. As a result, society emerges simply as an arena of the interplay of conflicting interests and not a framework of thought-ways, and work-ways that shapes man's orientation and guides and channels his energies in a proper direction for realizing his purposes.

In order, therefore, to apprehend the proper relationship between the individual and society, it is necessary to take into account the totality of human nature composed of diverse elements. But what is this totality? Without specifying this totality endowed with a multifacetedness that allows man to participate in the creation and sustenance of social order, the apprehension of the proper relationship between the individual and the society he is a part of will remain elusive. 'Without an idea of man', Voegelin notes, 'we have no frame of reference for the designation of human phenomenon as relevant or irrelevant. Man is engaged in the creation of social order physically, biologically, intellectually, and spiritually.'²⁹ And, it must be added, only some of these engagements admit of 'general laws'.

Add to the multifacetedness of man's participation in the creation

and maintenance of society three kinds of hierarchy that impinge heavily on man's existence in history. The first hierarchy refers to the *sapta loka* (seven worlds) at the apex of which is *satyam* or the absolute, pure consciousness, whose transformation through different layers of graded worlds one within the other forms a compact, cohesive and organic system. In this organic whole, the earth and all the beings inhabiting it are inextricably enmeshed in a network of purposes, a ladder or hierarchy of intentions, purposes, functions and possibilities.

There is yet another hierarchy of beings that refers to the tripartite division of all beings based on differential combinations of body, sense organs, and minds.³⁰ There are beings with only body and are called *asanjna* (inanimate without consciousness); those who have both body and mind are *antah-sanjna* (sentient but without intelligence), such as, birds, animals, etc.; and, then there are beings, such as, men, who have all the three qualities, that is, body, mind and intelligence, or *sasanjna*. The last hierarchy pertains to the constitution of man as *sasanjna* being. Here, two factors, one related with the structure of man's interior and the other pertaining to the psycho-physical constitution of man, influence what man is and becomes in this world. First, there is the hierarchy of the soul, life force and appetites and, second, there are three *gunas* (qualities)—*sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*—whose differential combination determines the nature of man in terms of his natural inclinations, or *pravrtti*. It is these three hierarchies that are intimately related with man's existence in history.

We must, then ask: How are these hierarchies integrated in man's being and what ramification does this integration have for society? What is obvious is the fact that man has not only a dual character; he has also to live simultaneously on different planes of existence. Insofar as man's dual character is concerned, this cannot be explored and ascertained by focusing on his existence and activities in the phenomenal world. It is true that man has to engage in handling of the pragmatic affairs of his life; but his whole nature is not fully defined by them. Underlying the external, pragmatic existence of man is his subtle existence defined by the spiritual dimension of his being.³¹ Once this spiritual dimension of man's being is recognized, it leads to the awareness that while man, in his external, existential dimension, is immersed in the objective, material world, he also transcends this world. It is in this sense that while man is biologically, psychologically and sociologically determined, his ultimate destiny, as Nagarjuna emphasizes, is that of an unconditioned being;³² he is, in short, an ethico-religious entity. It is because of this that man does not just live his life, he leads it.

Having discovered himself to be an ethico-religious entity, man can no longer pretend to be simply part of the phenomenal world, precisely because spiritual experience is accompanied by the insight and awareness that one's person transcends the forms of worldly being, namely, space and time. This insight and the awareness engendered by it are kept alive by a conscious effort to maintain a strict hierarchical order in his interior, a vertical hierarchy in which the soul provides the 'superior element' Freud talks about; it is this 'superior element' that controls and regulates his energies or life force and appetites. This superior element is, of course, the soul as the sensorium of divine. When the soul is attuned to the divine ground of being, man transcends his determination by biological, psychological and sociological factors and proceeds to explore the extent of his unconditioned being. It is against this background that we can appreciate why Indian thought ascribes greater values to rising above the conditioned and relating the self to the unconditioned and identifying with it. Everything in the realm of the conditioned is always becoming. 'Now whatever becomes, is transformed, dies, and disappears, is not the part of the sphere of being.'³³ Indian thought has, therefore, emphasized dissociation with, but not rejection of, the realm of becoming and concentrating on and informing the everydayness by the cultivation of the inner self as the centre of experience. This inner self is

an independent, imperishable entity, underlying the conscious personality and bodily frame. Everything that we normally know and express about ourselves belongs to the sphere of change, the sphere of time and space and the veiling net of causality, beyond measure, beyond the dominion of the eye.³⁴

It is this imperishable entity that constitutes the vital centre of every person. In the discovery of this vital centre, deeply embedded in the unconscious behind the waking consciousness, the knowledge of things that are changeable is of no help. The primary concern therefore of Indian thought

... in striking contrast to the interest of modern philosophers of the West—has always been, not information, but transformation; a radical changing of man's nature and, therewith a renovation of his understanding both of the outer world and his own existence, transformation as complete as possible, such as will amount when successful to a total conversion or rebirth.³⁵

It is this rebirth that provides the basis for acquiring a passing glimpse of the structure of order which, then, becomes the paradigm of

ordering both man's interior and his social world, including the political. It is this rebirth that, for Plato, makes a man philosopher and provides him with a synoptic vision that can discern the true *politeia* for creating a just political order. Plato, however, gives priority to political order, not to social order, as the entity capable of integrating the individual with the larger order as the basis of his commitment to the requirements of justice. However, when the social world is left untouched by the transforming alchemy of spiritual experience, political order slips into the mire of ineffectiveness. That is why, in contrast with the Platonic paradigm, the Vedic perspective gives equal, if not greater weight, to society as the keeper of the morals of its members. As the keeper of moral, society must derive its organizational structure from the self-knowledge of man, especially the self-knowledge of seer-poets or *kavirmaneeshis* that constitutes the norms for the formation of individual psyche and the structuring of collective life and relations.

The real significance of self-knowledge is that it consciously forges a link between the finiteness of human existence and the absoluteness of *satyam*, the *arche* which transforms itself into the cosmos. It is true that the cosmos is one organic whole. It is, as Giordano Bruno observes, one in substance, but many in form. One of these forms, the spirit, is the self-consciousness of that substance. It is this self-consciousness which, when pervasive in society, becomes the ground of what Heraclitus calls 'xynon' or what Pande calls *saman-ehittata*, that is, shareable commonality. Social consciousness is not, therefore, the aggregation of different varieties of individual consciousness in modern psychological sense but the socialized form of consciousness for the cosmos as spirit transcending but moulding individual consciousness plays the essential role of keeping the individual 'awake' to his relatedness with the ground of being, the prime source of spiritual consciousness. 'Only one cosmos ... exists for the "waking" alone, while the sleepers each have their own private world, a world of dreams'.³⁶ When the world of dreams takes hold of men, consensus as the foundation of community is destroyed. Value subjectivity produces only a situation of eristics in which people stick to their own guns. This is symptomatic of the breaking down of the bridge of common humanity, as Voegelin puts it.³⁷ If this bridge is allowed to collapse or is considered to be not relevant if it has collapsed, the problem of communication and intelligibility in a decadent society becomes very acute. Argument fails or leads to quarrels;³⁸ politics exacerbates dissensions. It is because of this that prior consensus grounded in the conscious experience of the shareable

commonality by the members of society becomes the *sine qua non* of building and sustaining the sense of community as the basis of harmonious and salubrious collective life and relations.

Harmony in man's interior is necessary but is not automatic; it is cultivated by each individual by his self-effort. However, two things need to be noted in this regard. First, it is not possible for every person to engage in the onerous task of self-development through self-knowledge. Second, it is, therefore, necessary that a social order capable of keeping the individual on the path of virtue must exist. Even self-effort must be matched by a social system that supports and sustains it or, at least, does not create hefty road blocks that discourage or kill self-effort. The urge to harmonize one's interior and thus cultivate certain virtue necessary for a harmoniously functioning social order may germinate in man's interior. However, it needs proper environmental condition to allow it a healthy and vigorous growth. In many cases, the values necessary for harmonious social existence, if not the urge for properly ordering man's interior, have to be inculcated and prevented from erosion, through processes which, for their effectiveness, depend on a suitable institutional environment.

To provide such an institutional structure undergirded by a value system and expressed through and reinforced by certain practices is the responsibility of society. It is in this sense that society cannot be considered as a mechanical aggregate of self-defining subjects; it is something larger than all the individuals that comprise it and its structure and function are not changed by individual in the short haul of time. In Pande's words:

Social consciousness can be distinguished by the fact that it regulates as a partially manifest order of things, understanding, the *samskaras* (acquired traits that help in the refinement of character), memories and faith of its individual members in a relatively longer temporal framework. In this sense, society can be understood as the deeply-embedded soul, as the sub-stratum of individuals; it is in this form that it makes its members aware of and sustains their identity, ideals, rights and duties and provides them with the opportunity to live their life and engage in action in a way that it sanctions. All individuals find themselves related with a tradition of knowledge and understanding and a network of relationship that are larger than their own finite existence. If this tradition of knowledge and understanding can be characterized as culture, then, the network of relationships can be called society. Man as a being endowed with consciousness is, in this sense, a resident of a socio-cultural cosmos which has an external form and internal consciousness.³⁹

Thus society and its substance cannot be fully grasped by exploring its external form alone. It is necessary to relate the manifest, visible, external form to its internal substratum. Externally, social life and relations assume a particular form because of the concatenation and cumulation of the effects of action men engage into for realizing their different purposes. But these purposes themselves draw their inspiration and derive their legitimacy from the underlying ideals that are beyond the dominion of eye and principles that give a particular form to its distinctive character and significance.⁴⁰

What must also be emphasized here is that the dynamic and intimate relationship between the external and internal aspects of social consciousness and its wide-spread acceptance in society are due to its groundedness in spiritual consciousness and the awareness of the cosmos as the abode of the Supreme Being. It is this interrelation among the transcendental truth as experienced by seers, sages and philosophers, the internal springs of values derived from the interpretation of the transcendental truth as the society's self-interpretation of truth and the external aspect of society constituting the realm of action that is symbolized as society. It is this interrelationship, again, that articulates, in terms of institutional arrangement. This articulation, it does not need to be pointed out, is made possible with the symbols that give concrete expression to the ineffable experience of order. It is as the result of the 'interpretation of institutions and experiences of order that a society's form is a unique and authoritative articulation of the truth of being'.⁴¹

This internal structure of social reality is not experienced merely as an accident or a convenience by the members of the society, but is expressive of their human essence. And, inversely, the symbols express the experience that man is fully man by virtue of his participation in a whole which transcends his particular existence.⁴² The articulation through a constellation of symbols, myths, rites, is what literally constitutes a society and orders it in a distinctive way. As such, it is the symbolic form of existence that creates a society. In the course of being preserved and reaffirmed through ritual observance, the symbolic form sustains the society by harmoniously securing the attunement of its members to the truth of being. This is the means by which a society attains and retains its identity in history. A society's civilizational form is, therefore, its mode and allotted measure of participation in the world-historic process of experience and symbolization of order that extends indefinitely into the future.⁴³ It is in this sense that society's civilizational form has historical singularity that can never be absorbed by phenomenal regularities, because the form itself is an act in the drama of human

beings striving towards truth of being.

It is against this perspective that we can see that the form and substance of a society can be fully misapprehended and misunderstood if we focus our attention on its externalities alone. It is true that the form of a society is the most visible and, therefore, easily apprehensible aspect of its existence in history. However, the form itself arises from the society's self-interpretation of the substratum of reality and its concrete expression in a particular mode of order concretely articulated and expressed in the society's institutional arrangement. It is this experience of transcendence that, when widely accepted and communicated through different methods, forms the substance of society and gives meaning to its form. It is this experience, that constitutes and sustains the fundamental consensus based on shareable commonality. Also, it is this experience that finds expression in elaborate symbols.

... communicating the fundamental consensus of the society and shaping the fabric of its institutional life and the public and personal lives of the people. It forms the belief structure which is the distinctive foundation of association in society, and it also shapes the essential humanity of the individual members of the society by supplying meaning in their existence as participants in a reality which they experience as transcending merely private existence.⁴⁴

Needless to say that the Vedic idea of social order exemplifies the perspective delineated above remarkably well. The substance which shapes its existence in history and animates its members for engaging in the realization of life purposes, both pragmatic and transcendental, is derived from the Vedic 'likely story' of creation or *shrishti vidya*. The creation of the cosmos, as we have already seen, becomes possible through *yajna* in which Brahma is gradually transformed into *vishwa* or the cosmos. It is this *yajna* that constitutes the fundamental paradigm of Vedic society. The pursuit of different life purposes, subsumed the generic term, '*purushartha*' must be subjugated to transcendental values that are derived from the effort to promote self-development through self-knowledge. It is this subjugation that constitutes in the social world *yajna*, that is, the act of making everything sacred. It is for this reason that society is treated in the Vedic perspective as *yajna* in which different classes of people cooperate to fulfill its fundamental requirements. As Coomaraswamy observes that the 'form of order (*yatharthata*) and impartiality (*samadrsti*) will mean that every man shall be enabled to become and by no misdirection prevented from becoming, what he has

in him to become'.⁴⁵

The social order reflecting the way of sacrifice must encompass a hierarchy of sacerdotal, royal, and administrative powers, and of physical organs of sense and action. Coomaraswamy further says:

In the sacramental order there is need and place for all men's work; and there is no more significant consequence of the principle than, work is sacrifice, the fact that under these conditions ... every function from that of the priest and the king down to that of the potter and scavenger, is literally a priesthood and every operation a rite.⁴⁶

The sacramental order of society takes on, in the Vedic perspective, the form of *varnashrama vyavastha* the fundamental institutional arrangement that constitutes the reliable instrument of realizing common well-being. If *varna* arrangement of society fixes functions, duties and rights of persons according to their native attributes,⁴⁷ the *ashrama* prescribes the duties of each person according to four life stages, that is, *brahmacharya* (education), *grhasthya* (householder), *vanaprastha* (preparatory stage for renunciation), and *sanyas* (renunciation). The real significance of *varnashrama vyavastha* lies in the unique Vedic perspective on human existence that combines, as Pande points out, the realization of different life-purposes based on end-means relationship with the order of ideals and duties grounded in certain transcendental values. In this combination, the fulfillment of ordinary life-needs is incorporated in the framework of *artha-tantra* or the joining of means with end and the mobilization of necessary resources for this, while the ideals and duties that must govern the fulfillment of different life-needs are included in *dharma-tantra* (just order).⁴⁸

Recognizing as it does the need to combine the 'this worldly and the other-worldly' ends in a benign and personally and socially beneficial pattern of, combination and integration, the Vedic perspective, as already pointed out, accepts as given the diversity for the human and natural worlds. It posits a triparite division of all beings in the world, such as, *asanjna*, *antah-sanjna* and *sasanjna*. In this varied and variegated world, man, although endowed with consciousness, is a highly differentiated species. The Vedic perspective recognizes types of persons reflecting the preeminence of a particular *guna*.⁴⁹ It is their differential combinations that produce a variety of human nature. As a result of all these, the social world itself comes to be characterized by a diversity which is not in any sense less bewildering and difficult to manage.

Apart from the diversity of human nature that characterizes society, there is also a plethora of human purposes that must be recognized

and opportunities for realizing these purposes must be made available so that men of different types can give full scope to their potentialities to develop, attain maturity and be fully realized. But diversity must not be allowed to become antagonistic and make the social world an arena of conflict. As such, the prime responsibility of social order is to link and coordinate diverse human nature, purposes and efforts directed to realize these purposes in a way that safeguards the viability, integrity, and distinctness of the social order without blocking the opportunities for individuals to grow in the direction their nature prescribes and society sanctions. It is against this perspective that we can truly appreciate the substance and the form of the society of Vedic conception has assumed.

If the diversity of human nature and plurality of purposes growing out of it are reflected, on the individual level, in four *purusharthas*, combining both pragmatic and transcendental concerns, they find their concrete expression, on the social level, in *varnavyavastha*. Based as it is on a division of functions, functions that, in turn, are grounded in the natural inclination (*pravritti*) of the individuals, the *varnavyavastha* permits individuals to pursue vocations in keeping with their capacities. Each *varna* has, therefore, its own *dharma* both in the sense of naturally ingrained inclination and of the ideal principles (*dharma* in the moral sense) that should guide and govern the functions performed by a person belonging to a particular *varna*. It is in this latter sense that *varnadharma* is distinguished from *sadharanadharmā*, that is, moral principles applicable to all.

What is the relationship, we must ask, between *varnadharma* and *sadharanadharmā*. One school of thought underlines the fact that there are accessions when *varnadharma* and *sadharanadharmā* come into conflict; in such cases, the former must take precedence over the latter.⁵⁰ However, treat *varnadharma* as prior to and superior then *sadharanadharmā* is to make the former above the consideration of all virtue, such as, forgiveness, self-control, non-stealing, etc., implied in the latter. This is likely to open the way to the aggressive pursuit of *varnadharma* as a means of advancing self-interest masquerading as collective good. That is why the Vedic perspective insists on the need to inform *varnadharma* with *sadharanadharmā*. As Mitra remarks:

The end in these common and universal duties is not the common well-being, which is being correctly realized in specific communities; but the common good as the precondition and the foundation of the latter; it is not the good which is common-in-the-individual but common-as-the-prius-of-the-individual.⁵¹

It is thus clear that even while *varnavyavastha* divides the society into numerous functional segments, these segments are integrated into an organic whole because of the existence and operation of several factors. In the first place, none of the *varnas* is sufficient in itself; it has to depend on other *varnas* not only for survival but also for sustenance and support. This in itself makes interdependence and cooperation necessary among different *varnas*. But it is symptomatic only of functional interdependence which in the lack of proper normative underpinning, may degenerate into business, and, therefore, exploitative relationship. In the second place, therefore, functional interdependence is undergirded by two important factors. First, there is the need to link the conduct of pragmatic affairs of everyday life with the pursuit of higher life purpose. This, means that the pursuit of *kama* and *artha* must be subjugated to the discipline of *dharma*. In addition, it is also necessary to seek release from bondage from the world of attachments after one has performed his duties in the phenomenal world. This, again, requires a person to live a virtuous life by regulating his life according to moral principles. The second factor to be taken into account is the need to subjugate the observance of *varnadharma* to *sadharanadharma*.

It should be obvious by now that the Vedic view of man and his world does not deny the claim of everydayness and the need of fulfilling ordinary life needs. While giving due importance to ordinary life-needs, it also gives due place in man's life to the pursuit of a higher life purpose. This requires that the *artha-tantra* must be subordinated to *dharma-tantra*. To pursue all life-activities in accordance with *dharma* is the Vedic way of linking the finite existence of man with the absolute which is the source of truth, value and meaning. This linkage is possible because of the Vedic insistence on following *dharma* in realizing different life purposes. *Dharma*⁵² here signifies the eternal laws which maintain the world and is the later version of the Vedic *ṛta*. According to the Vedic way of thinking, the world 'is not the product of a fortuitous concourse of elements, but is ruled by certain norms and sustained by an order necessary to its preservation. The order is an objective one, inherent in things; and the gods are only its guardians'.⁵³

When extended to the moral realm, *dharma* refers to 'the totality of duties which bears upon the individual according to his status (*varna*) and the stage of life (*ashrama*) at which he stands, the totality of rules to which he must conform (sic)⁵⁴ if he is to manage his pragmatic affairs well which enriching his spiritual existence. It must, however, be emphasized that *dharma* is disembodied; it takes a concrete form in concrete social situations characterized by diversity of human nature

creating a multiplicity of climate opinion and interest. Diversity for opinion and interest creates diversity of human nature creating a multiplicity of climate opinion and interest. Diversity of opinion and interest creates diversity for contexts in which action takes place. It is through action in varying contexts of interests and opinions that *dharma* takes on a concrete shape. The embodiment of *dharma* into practice is *vyavahar* which differs from place to place because of the fact that the practices of the people located in a highly differentiated factual order vary greatly. Insofar as the application of a particular principle of *dharma* is mediated through the diversity of the lived world, a world differentiated on the basis of *desha* (space), *kala* (time) and *patra* (agency), different customs, conventions, interpretative systems, and different patterns of *lokachara* (practice of the people) come into being. It is this diversity (*vividhata*) that marks a social system irrespective of its size. It is this diversity, again, that makes it difficult for the shareable commonality (*saman-chittata*), to become a dynamic force in social life and relations. However, without a sense of shareable commonality, diversity poses a serious threat to order. But order is not worth a penny if diversity is sought to be destroyed. To do so would be tantamount to abolishing freedom and tampering with natural gifts men are endowed with. Diversity has, therefore, to be preserved and the integrity and autonomy of each of the elements defining diversity must be respected. This raises the question of combining freedom and order in such a way that it does not unnecessarily curb individual freedom, nor does it put the order of *dharma* in jeopardy. It is such a social system that the Vedic vision of man and his world envisages. It is the sovereignty of *dharma* that, in the Vedic perspective, forges a benign bridge between freedom and order ensuring that neither freedom is excessively restricted nor order is infringed.

The reason why *dharma* can successfully forge the link between everydayness and eternity is that it expresses at once a three-dimensional principle relating to the natural, metaphysical and ethical aspects of the cosmos; it enjoins man to shape his life in accord with it. *Dharma*, thus, refers to the structure of reality as well as the need to follow its precepts in life for harmony at personal and collective levels. In this sense, *dharma*, as an ethical principle means the cosmic law which constitutes the source for deriving principles of right conduct in highly differing contexts. As such, *dharma* can, for the sake of convenience, be termed as 'laws in actuality' as the symbol of the cosmic law. When applied to the human world, the cosmic law can be said to be 'the law in action' as the embodiment through the actual conduct of the people in

differing contexts of interest and opinion.

Dharma, as the product of the primordial insight into the structure of reality, does not render a fully developed and finished body of material rules of conduct. It only shapes human experience by revolutionizing it through the soul's attunement to the divine ground of being or, alternatively, through adherence to established social norms, practices, customs and conventions that symbolize the embodiment of 'the law in actuality'.

The conformity to established social norms and practices, it does not need to be emphasized, is a means of linking the two realms of the material and the non-material and everydayness and eternity. As such, it impregnates every act, whether pragmatic or religious, with symbolic meaning. It also shapes man's orientation which is transformed into *samskaras* (acquired attributes that refine and shape human character) and becomes instrumental in nurturing, sustaining and supporting the sense of shareable commonality. The *dharmic* order is, if true, perceived by some seer, sage or philosopher. But then it is articulated in doctrines which influence institutional arrangement in society, shapes practices, moulds men's minds and sustains the *dharmic* order in history through memory, tradition, rites and customs.⁵⁵

It is only when *dharma* assumes a live presence in the minds of men reinforced by social norms and practices that 'the rule of *dharma*' becomes 'rule of law' by a process going beyond the expression of it, a process which enables it to enter society armed with the power of constraint which is not inherent in it, something that assumes coercive character once it is declared and sectioned by the act of the ruler. But the ruler cannot, in a definitive and general way, substitute his will for the principles of *dharma*, or custom or *vyavahar*.⁵⁶ It is *dharma*, not law made by the king or somebody whether representative or appointed, that rules not only the people but also the ruler who accepts *dharma* as his *adhiraja*. And as the *adhiraja* of the ruler, *dharma* makes the *danda* its ally in enforcing and sustaining the order of *dharma*.

The order of *dharma* not only joins the sphere of everydayness with eternity as the source of value and meaning. As manifestation of the one, it forms the basis of unity but allows this unity to assume diverse forms in time and space without, however, allowing this diversity to break the bond of unity. As a framework of unity, *dharma* ruled society provides ample opportunities to its members to use their freedom in creating and innovating new patterns of thought-ways and work-ways provided they adhere to the basic tenets of *dharma*. In such a society, the institutionalized public order, if it is to be operationally satisfactory as a

habitat for men, must truly represent the *dharmic* order and be reflected in every individual's orientation and behaviour. Only when *dharma* gets sustenance in society from its members' thinking and action, does it instill respect for and obedience of law as declared by the ruler. The Vedic idea of an appropriate social order, based as it is on the firm foundation of *dharma*, provides, perhaps, the most effective basis for the reconciliation of the good of one individual and the good of all individuals. As Pande observes:

Affection and hospitality, tolerance and acceptance, charity and philanthropy, non-violence and compassion, have been widely accepted values in Indian tradition. Virtual autonomy of groups in regulating their accustomed mode of social life and harmony between them have been a marked feature of that tradition. The modern notion of the struggle of the individual against the group or groups against groups, whether classes, races or nations, were largely strangers in the context of the ancient ethos. The freedom which the individual sought was ideal freedom, not the freedom to maximize his competitive gains by any means. Instead of the notion of right, that of duty was pre-eminent. It was accepted that justice means non-discrimination but this did not lead to any notion of social or economic equality. Inequalities in these respects were accepted as inevitable on account of the diversity of human capacities, effects and virtue.⁵⁷

It is from such a society that the principle of regnum gets proper support and sustenance. That is why the Vedic perspective or order makes the political order only an adjunct of the social order and assigns to it the responsibility of protecting fundamental elements of the *dharmic* order from the depredation of human cupidity.

NOTES

1. Eric Voegelin, *Introduction to History of Political Ideas: Hellenism, Rome and Early Christianity*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1997, vol. 1, Appendix A, p. 225.
2. Ibid.
3. John H. Schaar, *Escape from Authority: Perspectives on Eric Fromm*, Basic Books, New York, 1961, p. 296.
4. Roberto M. Unger, *Knowledge and Politics*, op. cit., p. 75.
5. Ibid., p. 49.
6. G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Books and Books, New Delhi, 1994, vol. I, p. 24.
7. Unger, op. cit., 73.

8. See Govinda Chandra Pande, *Bharatiya Parampara ke Mula Svara*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, p. 61.
9. *Ibid.*, ch. 10.
10. Govind Chandra Pande, *Bhartiya Samaj: Tattwika aur Aitihāsika Vivechan*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, ch. 1.
11. Stanley Rosen, 'Man's Hope', *Social Research*, p. 619.
12. Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1991, p. 146.
13. Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*, Yale University Press, Colombia, 1999, ch. 3.
14. Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, Norman Kemp Smith, Modern Library, Colombia, 1958, pp. 27-8.
15. See, Barry Cooper, *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, University of Missouri Press, Colombia, 1999, ch. 3.
16. Unger, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
17. The relegation of reason to an instrumental role raises the question of the regulating principle for keeping passions, some of which are turbulent and destructive, on a leash. Recognizing passions to be the dominant trait of human personality and recognizing, too, the inadequacy of moralizing philosophy and religious precepts, the search for a regulating principle came to centre around, first, entrusting the state with the responsibility of keeping passions under control and, later, subordinating them to one master passion. This passion was identified as self interest, in the sense of the grand passion for augmenting fortunes and the desire for bettering one's material condition, in a word, avarice. See Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987. With avarice becoming the propelling force, man came to be considered nothing more than 'an externalized creature', an object, self-interest crowding out man's inner being. See Ellen M. Wood, *Mind and Politics: An Approach to the Meaning of Liberal and Socialist Individualism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972, esp. p. 111. It is in self-interest, then, that the fleeting, fluid self gains a firm anchor which lends it a particular character and prompts it to action. It is in this sense that John Dewey's dictum, 'I own, therefore I am' expresses a better characterization of man in modern times than the Cartesian 'I think, therefore I am'.
18. On this see Charles Taylor, 'The Concept of a Person', B.N. Ganguly Memorial Lectures, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, March 1981, 3rd Lecture, p. 11.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Charles Taylor, 'Growth, Legitimacy and the Modern Identity', *Praxis International*, 1, 2, (only 1981), p. 113.
21. See, for example, David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, where Hume identifies the world with 'one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond human senses and faculties can trace and explain', cited in Becker, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
22. Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979, p. 75.
23. See A. Merquior, *The Veil and the Mask: Essays on Culture and Ideology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p. 39.

24. From Vico through Hegel to Marx, the process of the self-making of man has been the organizing perspective on man and his world.
25. E.N.B. Tyler, *Primitive Culture* Murray, London, 1871, pp. 2-3.
26. Sigmund Freud in Phillip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralists*, Anchor Books, New York, 1961, p. 31.
27. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History: Plato and Aristotle*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1957, III, p. 69.
28. G.C. Pande, *Bharatiya Samaj*, p. 16.
29. Quoted in Barry Cooper, op. cit., p. 78.
30. Based on Max Scheler's version of philosophical anthropology, Voegelin categorises all beings into four classes: Human, Animal, Vegetative and Inorganic. See Cooper, op. cit., p. 169.
31. See Pande, *Bharatiya Samaj*, p. 23. This is indicative of dual nature of man; it is this symbol of dual nature that has a genuine ontological status which can be explored only with the help of proper philosophical deliberation. This deliberation will fail to yield a proper understanding of man and his world of this ontological reality, expressed in the symbol dual nature, is sought to be reduced to one or another of its constituent elements.
32. See Venkata K. Ramanan, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978, pp. 100-2.
33. Mircea Eliade, *Patanjali and Yoga*, tr. Lam Markham, Schocken Books, New York, 1976, p. 6.
34. Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952, p. 3.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
36. Heraclitus, quoted in Jaeger, *Paidiea*, 1, p. 180.
37. Voegelin, *Order and History: Plato and Aristotle*, III, p. 29.
38. Jurgen Habermas recommends 'communicative competence' based on discursive logic as the instrument of building consensus in society. However, he also argues that, for this competence to be effective, prior consensus is necessary. But he fails to indicate how this 'prior consensus' can be achieved. He also fails to realize that in a social situation marked by the break-down of consensus, discursive logic cannot be effective in building consensus. See his *Legitimation Crisis*, introduction.
39. Pande, *Bharatiya Samaj*, p. 12.
40. See *ibid.*, p. 13.
41. Voegelin, *Order and History: Israel and Revelation*, 1, p. 60.
42. Voegelin *The New Science of Politics*, p. 27.
43. Voegelin, *Order and History*, 1, p. 61.
44. Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1981, p. 26.
45. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 26.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
47. The origin of the caste system in India is traced by many back to *purusha-sukta*, a creation hymn, which depicts the characteristics of an organic cosmos. When it refers to *varnas*, it describes qualities that are necessary in forming a social world whose harmonious blending in the social whole is *sine qua non*. It identifies different categories of people distinguished by qualities unique to each of them. Described in these terms, the *varnas* referred to in the *sukta* do not constitute

- hierarchically graded caste groups in sociological sense, but refer to attributes that are not hierarchically organized but horizontally woven into a network of interdependence, cooperation and harmony.
48. Pande, *Bharatiya Samaj*, p. 23.
 49. Three basic *gunas*, *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, are said to produce a diversity of human nature. Needless to say that these *gunas* are the three movements—*utkranti* (centrifugal), *adana* (centripetal), and *pratishtha* (rest, equilibrium)—in which Brahma gets divided in its procession towards becoming the *vishwa*, the cosmos. These movements represent essential qualities or properties or tendencies that inhere in all beings and appear in all aspects of the universe. When applied to psyche or *adhyatmika* sphere, they are called *gunas* each of which stands for a particular tendency. *Sattwa*, for example, creates cohesion, represents concentration of energy, a coming together, a power of concentration. Its surrogate God is Vishnu. *Tamas*, on the contrary, represents darkness, the power that prevents concentration, diffusion of energy. Its presiding deity is Indra or Rudra. *Rajas* symbolizes equilibrium or the base on which different movements take place and get equilibrated. It is represented by Prajapati or Brahma. For a brief but succinct discussion, see Alain Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1964, Bollingen series LXXII, pp. 22-8.
 50. S. Dasgupta. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1965, vol. 1, pp. 507-8.
 51. S.K. Mitra, *Ethics of the Hindus*, Asia Rule Service, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 3-4.
 52. The work *dharma* is used in several widely different senses. The most general sense is provided by what is strong, firm, durable and reliable.
 53. Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, tr. By J. Duncan M. Derrett, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, p. 3. Lingat further observes that 'during the Vedic period the fundamental laws of the universe were identified with laws of the sacrifice. Consequently, *dharma* was par excellence the sacrificial act which maintains and even conditions the cosmic order'. Two grievous errors can be detected in this statement. In the first place, even while Lingat ascribes this view to the Mimamsa school, he projects it back on the Vedic world-view which is, to say the least, anachronistic because he identifies *ṛta* with the laws of the sacrifice. It does not need to be pointed out that the meaning of sacrifice, insofar as the Vedic sense of its meaning is concerned, is the process through which Brahma becomes the *vishwa*. See *Beyond Ego's Domain: Being and Order in the Veda*, ch. 4. Sacrifice (*yajna*) in this context means self transformation of the idea into *nama* and *rupa*. By the time we come to Mimamsa, the process of self transformation is turned into an externalized system of rituals (*karmakanda*). In the second place, it is a misnomer to say that the sacrificial act 'maintains or even conditions the cosmic order'. As a matter of fact, it is the cosmic order as symbolized by *ṛta* that constitutes and paradigm as well as the source of sacrifice. The performance of *yajna* by a person is for self-transformation which helps the preservation of the cosmic order by safeguarding the process of exchange between man, gods and other beings. It is the process of exchange that points out, maintains the cosmic metabolism.
 54. Lingat, op. cit., p. 4.
 55. See Pande, *Bharatiya Samaj*, pp. 14-15.
 56. Lingat, op. cit., p. 224.

- 57. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture: Dimensions of Ancient Indian History*, Books and Books, vol. II, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 169-70.