

Response to Professor J. Kuczyński's  
Universalism as a metaphilosophy of mankind

Professor Kuczyński recognizes the dire need for a new thought, for a metaphilosophy and he gives some indication of its general features. He still preserves, however, the marxist contention that it is the system that makes the man, particularly the economic system which is foundational in the structure of all societies. It is at this point that I take issue with him. "It is not the case of changing the system," he writes of Socialism/Communism, "but rather, of changing the management methods." (p.18). I argue that, in addition to the management methods, it is the very nature of the managers itself that needs to change. In other words, what is at issue is a profound change, a revolution in man's nature.

Even if one were to concede that man is a product of Society, one would still have to give due recognition to a person like Marx, the contribution he has made to human thought and the impact his ideas have had in the shaping of the modern world. If the system influences the man, it is also true that man influences the system. And when it comes to the creation of a metaphilosophy, it seems obvious to me that economic systems, modes of production do not create philosophies -- men do. "Will we ever learn to think in a new way?" Professor Kuczyński asks, taking up the question raised by B. Russell. Thinking is man's prerogative. The question then is whether our times can produce the 'new' man that will produce the New Thought that will in turn produce 'new' men.

This New Thought ought to give a prominent place to a theory of human nature. In all fairness to Professor Kuczyński, one must indicate that he does point in several places of his paper to the fact that man, while being part of Nature is also distinct from it. Man is a social and economic being (pp.10-11), a part of the collective subject (p.14) having to work out the relationship between the whole and the individual (p.3). He is self-creating in the sense that he exercises freedom to shape his life (p.5), becoming an authentic creator (p.8) as he enriches the cultural heritage (p.6) for the common good (p.9). He is a distinct individual but at the same time he is a member of a family (p.7), partaking simultaneously of the order of the mind as of that of the heart (pp.19-20). Professor Kuczyński optimistically looks forward to the passage of mankind-in-itself to mankind-for-itself (p.31).

At the heart of the new order then is man. Philosophies are made by and for men. Man is the centerpiece that determines war and peace, the success or failure of any system. There is more to man than biological, anthropological, economic and political dimensions. It is relevant therefore to talk of the human person endowed with mind, thoughts, feelings and creative powers that set him apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. These characteristics can generally be described as attributes of the spirit.

It seems to me that such an understanding of the human person is crucial to the kind of society we wish to create. The individual person is an end in himself not a means to some other end. He has a legitimate claim to personal fulfilment. The State can safeguard but in no way confers the inalienable rights that pertain to man by virtue of his innate character. As important as they may be to his physical existence, material goods in themselves are inadequate to satisfy human needs, which are multiple and are also of a spiritual order. The social structure ought to be such that the individual finds his true identity and value within the family, developing the moral worth that leads to the universal brotherhood of the human family and to spiritual equality.

It seems imperative to grasp that the performance of Western capitalist economies rests upon a certain understanding of human nature. Capitalism has capitalized, not on natural resources alone, but on human power, more precisely on a specific aspect of human nature, namely freedom of spirit. Capitalism has, wittingly or unwittingly, struck upon the formula that enables the individual to move towards optimum performance, that stimulates his creativity under freedom. Values of personal autonomy and integrity have been taken into account in determining the mode of production. Thus has been unleashed and harnessed the human energy, capital to any prosperous enterprise.

This concept of the human person is connected with the idea of private property. It is interesting to note that the preamble of the US Constitution originally advocated "Life, Liberty and Property" before it was changed to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness". These were to be among the inalienable rights of Man given him by his Creator. In any case, "the concept of private property," writes Jude Dougherty, "is the direct outcome of the concept of the self." ("The concept of 'Person' in American Legal Theory", ICUS, Washington, 1986, p.4). Furthermore "... the consciousness of the self contains the consciousness of property. In virtue of his reason and will, man makes use of external things to create about himself an ambience that is traceable to, and is the direct outcome of, his perception of himself. Hence property is no arbitrary idea but is founded on man's natural impulse to extend his own personality" (Ibid., p.4) Man's first private property is his own body which he extends to his environment as he grows in consciousness.

This being so, the main factor in the creation of wealth (necessary for removing the cause of many a grievance) is not natural resources but human resources. The real wealth of a nation is its people. There again it is not the number of bodies but the degree to which individuals have been able to distinguish themselves from Nature, stand apart from it, understand its laws and apply them to satisfy their needs and shape their environment. If wealth were to be measured by natural resources or sheer size of population, Africa and India would be among the wealthiest countries in the world.

The fact that they are not is in itself an indication that we should seek elsewhere for the main factor in the creation of wealth. Wealth can be thought of as the fruit of man's proper exploitation of Nature. In this relationship, man is subject and nature is object. It is in the characteristics of a people, in their mental and technical abilities that we should seek for the power that generates wealth. It is man's mind, operating through man's limbs, that constitutes the core of this power. It is ideas, therefore, not things that determine wealth. (cf. Max Singer, Alternative perspectives on the Earth's prospects, ICUS, 1986.) It is the use to which a society puts its natural resources that matters. This argument is in direct opposition to the scarcity theory, for thus conceived, wealth can be created everywhere. Some particular kinds of raw materials might run out but it is not correct to speak alarmingly of dramatic depletion of resources. Japan shows how a relatively small country with limited raw materials has been able to create great wealth without engaging in imperialistic ventures and without abusing its people or the resources of other nations.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the creation of wealth can be learnt. People can be taught how to work better, how to be more efficient and productive, how to accumulate capital, in a word, how to master the economic principles that go into the creation of a viable system. There is a direct relationship between the acquisition of proper skills and wealth.

Equally important is the motivation factor. Professor Kucynski gives due credit to the profit principle when he writes: "...the motivation released there by the profit principle is an extraordinarily potent lever of development of economy, technology, science, which flourish in the USA, which give splendid results." (p.13) This also says something about human nature, about incentives, about the natural aspiration to reward for accomplishments. It is legitimate for the capitalist to seek a profit but not at the expense of the workers. In the first place, the worker should not be treated as an appendage of machinery and should be made, as a creative being, to share in the vision of the enterprise. This point meets, at a tangent, I think, what Professor Kucynski says about self-government. Furthermore, the worker should not be considered a liability but an asset. His wages should not be part of the costs but should be paid out of the profits which are to be shared by the employers. (Sang Hun Lee, The end of Communism, p.288) The business place, the factory can be run with the spirit of an extended family. Japan once again demonstrates the tremendous productivity that results when relationships between employers and employess are right. England in the 60's and the 70's is an example of the converse. When the business enterprise becomes a joint venture and risks as well as profits are equitably shared, productivity naturally increases.

It should be clear by now, I hope, that the human factor is the key. More important than a technical change, a political

change or a change in the mode of production is the cultural or spiritual change. The revolution that matters is the one that transforms the inner man. The fundamental question, it seems to me, is whether man can be made to radically change from a being of contradiction into a being of harmony. This takes us into the realm of religion and metaphysics, to be sure, but is not totally outside the scope of a metaphilosophy.

We have suggested earlier that a change of attitude among capitalists is necessary and possible. (Capitalism is reformable, says Professor Kucynski). Indeed, a country like America would cease to be perceived as imperialistic if it were to share of its resources and technology, genuinely seeking to alleviate the misery of the underprivileged at home and abroad. At the same time, this new philosophy would have dramatic implications for Communism as well. It would mean, for example, abandoning an aggressive foreign policy based on the false premise of progress through conflict. Professor Kucynski recognizes this by implication when he writes: "In contradistinction to the traditional, particularistic and selfish thinking, characterized by the perpetual and mutually destructive alternatives and antagonisms, this new thinking will have... actually the form of conjunction: not 'either-or' but 'and-and'." (p. 26) (Note: Professor must have good reasons not to mention the presence and influence of the USSR in determining peace in the world at large and the emancipation of Poland in particular.) It will also mean, in the spirit of self-government and freedom, the emergence of societies with plural institutions, vying with each other to defend the varied interests of different groups and social bodies. It also implies the opening of borders, freedom to travel by all, the free flow and exchange of information, among other things.

Socialism and Capitalism, instead of being antagonistic, I would agree with Professor Kucynski, can merge on a higher level. Thus the "complementarity of cultures" (p. 30) can take place, new nations learning equally from the capitalist free enterprise and market system as well as from the socialist mode of equitable distribution of wealth. Freedom is thus reconciled with Justice. Wealth is abundantly created and equal opportunities granted to all. A world of peace and plenty is no utopia but lies indeed within the reach of mankind provided we can pass from selfishness to unselfishness. This is the major role of any philosophy that aspires to universalism and to the transformation of mankind.

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