

SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL IN INDIAN POLITICAL THEORY

'I am That, thou art This; thou art This, I am That. I am Sky, thou art Earth. I am the Harmony, thou the Words. Let us twain here unite our houses.' The whole Indian theory of government is epitomised in these ritual words which the Brahman Priest addresses to the King. By a characteristic modern distortion of traditional thought, it has been supposed that the King addresses them to the Priest, and Dr. Coomaraswamy devotes a great part of his new book¹ to restoring the ancient interpretation beyond a doubt. His study is difficult reading, and touches on a whole multitude of matters which a short summary must necessarily pass over; but one may give some suggestion of the general scope of the argument and of the depth and serenity which set it apart from the many political philosophies now daily beating upon our ears.

Through all things there is hierarchy; as in heaven, so in earth, as in the government of 'these worlds,' so in that of states and of every man within himself. The spiritual is above the temporal, the contemplative above the active; and the Priest represents spiritual authority and the contemplative life, the King temporal power and the active life. In Eastern terms, the higher principle is described as masculine, the lower as feminine. Hence in the ideal marriage of *Sacerdotium* and *Regnum*, the Priest is bridegroom, the King is bride. The formula cited above is a marriage formula.

But as in the general order of things there is one unmoved Mover beneath whom every other mover is also moved, so in the order of government a given status is at once higher and lower, at once masculine and feminine. The centurion in the Gospel was masculine to the soldiers to whom he said *Go* and *Come*, feminine to his superiors in authority, and he recognised the authority of Our Lord as masculine to these also. The King is feminine to the Priest, masculine to his realm.

This premised, we may leave Dr. Coomaraswamy to speak for himself. 'If the Oriental and traditional Monarch is not a "constitutional ruler" whose actions merely reflect the wishes of a majority

¹ *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*. By Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. American Oriental Series, Vol. 22. (New Haven, 1942).

of his subjects or those of a secular minister, nor King by virtue of any "social" contract, but a ruler by Divine Right, this does not imply that he is an "absolute" ruler, but on the contrary that he is himself the subject of another King . . . The people are subject to the King, but not so the Brahmans, "whose King is Soma"; the people are "food" for the King, but the King is "food" for the Brahman, while there is another for whom the *Regnum* and the *Sacerdotium* both are "food" . . . The *Regnum* is not its own principle, but is controlled by another, the Eternal Law, the Truth, the "Kingship of the Kingship" . . . And as is the King to his vassals, so are these to their own followers, so is the patron to the artist and the man to his wife, each in turn a servant and a master in the feudal hierarchy stemming from the King of Kings.'

'What is meant by "autonomy"?' In the case of a king, to rule and not be ruled by the multitude of those who should be vassals and subjects; at home, to rule and not be ruled by one's family; and within you, to rule and not be ruled by one's desires . . . In a decadence such as that of the last centuries in Europe, the progressive "emancipation" of the less intellectual and more emotional elements in the community will mean the gradual substitution of feeling for knowledge as a basis for judgment in conduct or art. In ethics, the notion of altruism will take the place of that of justice; in literature, words will more and more be used for their emotive effect than treated as the vehicle of thought.'

'In a traditional society the oppressor is excommunicated and legally deposed; this may be followed by a submission, or by the installation of a more regular successor in whom the Kingship is reborn. In an anti-traditional society, when the oppressor has been removed by a popular revolution, those who have been oppressed propose to govern in their own interests, and become oppressors in their turn. The majority oppresses the minority. The rise of a plutocracy undermines what is still in name a majority rule. The inefficiency and corruption of the plutocracy prepares the way for the seizure of power by a single proletarian who becomes a Dictator, or what is called in more technical terms a Tyrant, who no longer pays even lip-service to any power above his own, and even if he has "good intentions" is nevertheless "unprincipled." This caricature of monarchy in turn prepares the way for a state of disorder such as may well be realised in the world in our own times. It is, indeed, already apparent that "what we call our civilisation is but a murderous machine with no conscience and no ideals" (*G. La Piana*). Such is the final consequence of the divorce of the Temporal Power

from the Spiritual Authority, Might from Right, Action from Contemplation.'

After which, nothing remains but to repeat the aspiration of the traditional Sanskrit text: 'Where the Priesthood and the Kingship move together in one accord, that holy world I fain would know.'

WALTER SHEWRING.

PHILOSOPHY IN EAST AND WEST

Until recently most Europeans imagined that 'history of thought' and 'development of Western civilisation' were almost the same thing. The development of Western thought was seen as a coherent whole and as the only one that mattered both for the present and the future. Hence Western scholars quite naively judged Indian and Chinese thought by their own standards.

Eastern achievements in religion and philosophy appeared on the horizon of our spiritual world as strange, attractive phenomena. To see a Chinese work of art is, indeed, an exciting experience. But, in our culture, art has a place apart; we can enjoy these astonishing creations without identifying ourselves with the particular feeling for life which is embodied in them. In the same way some ancient Eastern religious and philosophical writings appealed to moderns who, though rather sceptical in matters of religious creed and dogmas, yet regarded mystical experience of the Infinite as the core of religion. The documents of early Indian metaphysics—the so-called Upanishads—were interpreted in this romantic way as remnants of 'a far off, ancient household of the soul.' Of the rich philosophical literature of China one book has become popular in Western Europe since it was discovered in the last century: the so-called Tao Te ching, the title indicating that its subject is both the Absolute and absolute, or perfect, action. This short but great book, composed about the end of the creative period of ancient Chinese philosophy (3rd century B.C.), was accepted as the embodiment of a primæval metaphysic that could be regarded as mysticism. Translated again and again in nearly all Western languages, it has obtained a definite place in what is called 'World Literature.'

Besides these rather amateurish approaches to the Eastern world, there arose the truly scholarly interest of thinkers who concerned themselves with the universal history of thought. It was inevitable