CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, we shall first carry out a brief resume of Roy's logical argument as has emerged in the course of our analysis of the three key concepts of his system -- reason, renaissance and revolution. This will enable us to get an over-all perspective of Roy's theory. In the second section we propose to present a critical evaluation of Roy's theoretical formulations and make a note of some of the lacunae in his arguments. Some of these observations have been made in the main body of the study and though it may appear that we are repeating what has already been said, it is necessary to recapitulate the points made earlier to bring them into sharper focus.

SECTION I

Summing Up

We have traced through the thesis the three concepts of reason, renaissance and revolution which are, we have argued, the fundamental notions providing the anchorage to Roy's system of Radical Humanism.

Reason emerges as the corner-stone of the structure of Roy's theory, the key to understanding his philosophy. Reason occupies this
crucial and significant position in Roy's theory because he perceives it as the panacea for all ills of modern times. To be more specific, reason is the only remedy for the crisis which, Roy believes, confronts the world today. For Roy, the crisis, as already noted earlier, was not just a political or economic or social crisis. It was a crisis that had affected the very foundation of modern civilisation. It was a moral crisis. And this moral crisis was the result of modern-day scepticism which doubted causality in nature, or in other words, which doubted reason in nature. Reason, which is causality, is morality for Roy. So if reason itself were doubted, then the very basis of a secular morality was undermined. Consequently, man has lost faith in himself and turned to religion and mysticism; hence there is a loss of freedom. The only way out of this crisis, therefore, was to rehabilitate reason, on the basis of scientific knowledge. The advanced knowledge of biology and physiology had proved for Roy that reason was a fact of nature, an ontological reality.

Reason, in nature is causality and man, who is an inseparable part of nature, is also rational. Causality is morality, man is rational, and therefore he is moral. The solution to the moral crisis, is consequently, located in reason. Man has to be reminded and convinced that his real nature is rational. This will restore his faith in himself and he will cease to depend on supernatural powers. And then he will be able to pursue truth and freedom.
Next, reason is presented as the basis of all true knowledge; the only way of arriving at truth. Reason, in man, is the ability to think causally and it is with this rationality that man then unfolds the 'truth', which is the knowledge of the material, physical world or nature. To discover this truth man utilises and develops science, which is an enquiry into the natural processes, or in other words, the causality of nature. Thus, in Roy's framework, reason and science go together. Science and reason appear as the liberators of mankind for they dispel ignorance, and consequently, superstition and mysticism. Freedom, therefore, is arrived at only by the path of science. With this, Roy comes to the conclusion that an enlightened man can never be irrational.

It is from this conviction, that reason and science are the liberators of mankind, that Roy attaches so much importance to the renaissance. That is how the concepts of reason and renaissance are linked up in Roy's system. The renaissance was a reassertion of reason, which by destroying faith allowed science to grow once again. For Roy, it was this resurgence of rationality and science that led to the historic defeat of religion, superstition and mysticism. The dominance of the Church and the religious mode of thought was possible basically because of the limited knowledge of the natural laws. Naturally, man was more prone to believing in supernatural powers. However, with the reassertion of reason, and the growth of science that
took place during the Renaissance, the power and authority of religion was successfully overthrown. Man was thus liberated from the yoke of teleology which held that his life was predetermined. For now, with the advanced scientific knowledge at his command, man's being and becoming came to be explained by natural laws.

Since Roy identified the genesis of the moral crisis in false theories of man's being and becoming the solution to this had been discovered. The basis of a materialist ontology, and therefore morality, had been laid during the Renaissance and was later developed in 18th century in Europe. It was thus proved beyond doubt, Roy argues, that reason is a fact of nature and equally that man is rational. Scientific discoveries have liberated man from the bondage of ignorance.

This brings us to the third concept -- that of revolution. Since Roy identified the genesis of the crisis in the realm of ideas, he seeks a solution too in the realm of ideas. Therefore, a revolution implied a change in the mode of thought from an unscientific, religious way of thinking to a scientific, rational way of thinking. Logically then, for Roy, a revolution was brought about by a reassertion of reason. More precisely, the defeat of religion and belief by the dual liberating forces of reason and science, was a revolution. If the ideas are scientific, then freedom logically follows. Human history was, therefore, basically a conflict between reason and belief.
Thus, coming back to our earlier contention, the concept of reason is central to Roy's system of Radical Humanism. Renaissance and Revolution stand valid only on the basis of reason; they are meaningful in Roy's theory only in relation to Reason.

A Critical Evaluation

Roy's attempt at system-building is greatly admired, for one principal reason, namely he is one of those very few thinkers of modern India who attempted at system-building. However, it needs equally to be stressed that there are numerous chinks within the armour of the theory of Radical Humanism, which makes it untenable for several reasons.

Firstly, we would like to note that despite Roy's claims to being a monist materialist, he is in fact a dualist and an idealist. Roy proves ultimately to be an idealist due to the way he related ideas and objective reality. Roy maintains both to be autonomous and independent: ideas have no relation to objective reality except in that ideas lead to action. For Roy ideas and social forces move simultaneously and parallel to each other in the process of history, but they do not have any causal relation: if there is any it is only accidental. By isolating ideas from objective social reality, Roy ultimately removes ideas from history itself. The process of ideation is
the only material reality he associates with ideas -- it becomes, for Roy, the objective reality itself. Therefore, Roy's materialism emerges as a philosophical materialism, a materialism concerning itself with the ideas of matter or materiality and not the real materiality itself. It claims an ontological basis, not in materiality itself, but in the idea of material reality. In sum his theory is still basically idealist. On the other count, Roy remains a dualist for he is unable to show the connection between subject and object, between ideas and materiality. Both subject and object are static and independent. This is primarily because Roy has no concept of mediation. Both Hegel and Marx, through the concept of mediation, are able to transcend the duality of subject and object. Hegel, an idealist monist, was able to transcend the duality and relate subject and object through mental activity. Marx, a material monist relates subject-object through man's sensuous activity-labour. Roy developed no concept of interaction or mediation and, therefore, dualism persists in his system.

Next, we would like to point out that the ethical theory which Roy attempts to formulate is weak. On close analysis we find that he has no separate ethical theory. It conflates with his ontological theory, and what emerges as a consequence is a muddled, confused uneasy amalgam of the two. Further, Roy is unable to demonstrate how causality is morality. Reason as a moral principle is never really established. He asserts that man is moral because he is rational but is unable to substantiate this argument. We are unable, therefore,
to really appreciate how reason can be posed as a solution to the moral crisis he identifies. Roy ends up making a theology of reason.

Secondly, Roy's assertion that man is essentially good is utopian. It is idealistic for it poses rationality as essential in man. The point we wish to emphasize is that to make claims either for rationality or irrationality as basic traits is meaningless. For neither of these claims can then explain the complex reality of deviantional behaviour. Roy by posing man as essentially good, rational, fails to provide an explanation of evil and ultimately offers no explanation for deviantional behaviour. To attribute man with some such innate qualities, like Roy does, can surreptitiously admit mysticism into what he claims to be a scientific theory. The evil reality which is rejected, which is a historical reality, is posed against this innate goodness, which is claimed, can alone ward off the evil influence of irrationality.

I. Meszaros has brilliantly argued this issue though in a different context pointing out that, "Dualism is transparent in utopian conceptions, the idealised solution is rigidly opposed to the rejected reality. And since ideality and reality are not grasped as members of a dialectical interrelation, the abyss of dualistic undialectical opposition has to be bridged by some arbitrary assumption such as for instance the presumed benevolent nature of man."
Roy's ontological theory also suffers from a crucial lacuna. He is unable to convince us of man as different from other creatures of nature. In this context, Marx's argument seems more plausible, for he is able to demonstrate how man is different from other natural beings, though remaining a part of nature. Human beings due to their natural-biological constitution have appetites, and needs and natural propensities. But in the "conscious self-transcending act of coming-to-be" these needs are transformed into human-appetites and needs, changing their character by being transformed into something inherently historical. Man by appropriating nature, not in its given state, but through his labour becomes a creative being. Man, henceforth, relates to nature in a totally different manner as compared to other beings. Thus while remaining a natural being with natural needs, man differentiates himself from the rest of nature. For animals continue to be determined by nature, whereas man has been able to transcend the stage when he functioned like an animal. He now determines his life by his own doing. In the process of satisfying his needs that man becomes aware of himself as an individual. Man no longer identifies himself with only animal needs but with valuational needs of freedom and morality.

Roy had declared an all out war against religion and mysticism for they denied man freedom, and postulated 'ideality' as reality. Against this, Roy goes all out to show that reality is material, so
much so that he preferred to call his materialism Physical Realism. Accordingly, everything is ultimately matter, manifesting itself in different forms at different stages of evolution. Roy does not differentiate between subject and object and reduces both to matter; thus ending up in a reductionist or vulgar materialist position. However, as already argued, subjectivity and consciousness cannot be reduced to matter. It then makes the talk of freedom and purposiveness meaningless. The distinction between subject and object must be retained but this does not mean that it is an ontological duality of ideal and material. Both subjectivity and consciousness are derived from material reality, nevertheless they are distinct and must be conceived as such. Otherwise, we would end up in an absurd position, for matter cannot be conceived of, or attributed with a desire for freedom or moral concerns.

While denying subjectivity an autonomous identity, Roy holds ideas, however, to be totally independent and autonomous, bearing no relation to materiality except in the process of ideation. By explaining the process of ideation, Roy thinks he has established the materiality of ideas. However, as elaborated earlier, this is not enough. Roy fails to convince us that his ideas have a material base. Ideas, for Roy, have their own logic and momentum and are not in any way affected by reality. Therefore, Roy argues that ideas are able to grow in any direction, being determined solely by their own logic
alone. He fails to explain however, why certain ideas survive and why certain others fade away. Here one finds a Darwinian or mechanistic tinge to his logic. Those ideas survive which are rational while those which are irrational perish in the process of the evolution of ideas which is biologically determined.

From our analysis of the three concepts of reason, renaissance and revolution, what emerges is a kind of naturalism, or more specifically, a biologism. All three concepts have a certain historicity, certain connotations which gives them their specificity. Roy completely ignores their specific connotations, and reduces them all to biological concepts. For in Roy's framework, reason is innate in man. In other words, man is constitutively rational and rationality is morality. So morality becomes a biological function in man. Renaissance has also been revealed to be a biological phenomenon, being an assertion of the urge for freedom which is biologically determined. Therefore, the renaissance, which is a historiographic concept is transformed into a biological concept in Roy's theory. And lastly, for Roy, revolution too is a result of the assertion of the will and the urge for freedom which are innate in man, i.e., the products of biological evolution. Thus, all three notions are ultimately reduced to biology. Roy is revealed ultimately to be reductionist, a charge that he made against Marx also applies to him. Roy's notion of biologism is also rather muddled. By arguing that reason is a biological function, what really is Roy implying? Is he
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equating morality with other biological functions of man -- sleeping, eating etc.? On the other hand, he seems to be implying that reason is innate, an integral part of man.

The inherent weakness in Roy's understanding of the three concepts of reason, renaissance and revolution do not allow him to solve the problems he had hoped to, within Marxism, Idealism and Liberalism. It is clear from the above argument that he lacked discrete concepts, for everything is reduced to biological evolution.

It appears that Roy lacked a certain philosophical proficiency necessary to build a system. This is not to deny that Roy was an intellectual of a high calibre, but to simply state the fact that he lacked certain requisite skills. Many a times, Roy is more rhetorical than logical. Roy had no formal training in philosophy and that might be one of the reasons for this failing. At the same time, it is undeniably to Roy's credit that though he lacked a formal training in philosophy, he had managed to build a system. A system that was weak no doubt, but nevertheless a system. And this must be appreciated.

Roy's strength really lies in his ability to identify correctly some of the problems of Marxist theory and practice. Roy had very correctly located the positivistic, mechanical interpretation of history that was prevalent then. This brand of Marxism was extremely reduc-
tionist, explaining everything in terms of economic factors. The super-
structure, which included ideas, values etc., was hardly considered
relevant. As a result, the relationship between the base and super-
structure was lost sight of. The base had acquired such importance
that the super-structure was hardly ever studied to grasp a holistic
understanding of history. Now Roy, in his attempt to rectify this
rather mechanical reductionistic interpretation of history, swings
to the other extreme, and argues that ideas determine history. There-
fore, in his enumeration of the history of European civilisation there
is no account of any material on social reality. Roy does not demons-
trate the interaction between ideas and materiality and falls into
a similar reductionist trap as the Marxism against which he was rebell-
ing. Roy's own understanding of Marxism reveals itself to be mechani-
cal and reductionist. The infelicities in Roy's Marxism can be traced
to the strong influence of positivistic science, which was common
to the Marxists of his time. Positivism tends to simplify concepts
and reduces complexities to simple, causal explanations in the name
of science. And Roy's Marxism suffers from just such simplifications.3
For Roy, Marxism became a model to be applied to arrive at an explana-
tion of Indian society and not a method to be utilised in order to
understand historical processes. This is eminently clear from the strate-
gies he advocated on his return from abroad with a view to bringing
about a revolution in India.
Roy had rightly pointed out the problems that arise with the dictatorship of the proletariat represented by one party. Roy's own experience during the period of Stalin led him to the conclusion that the lack of a free intellectual debate within the Communist International had led to dictatorship. Roy's own expulsion, from the Comintern was, he believed, a consequence of his independent thinking. Yet it must be noted that is not yet known, what this article which supposedly contained his 'independent thoughts' really stated. From the differences that he seemed to have developed with the Comintern, they were related more to strategy and tactics and not fundamental theoretical differences. So Roy's objections were really to Stalin's reading of the historical situation upon which his strategies and tactics were based. However, Roy seems to confuse his criticism of Stalin's understanding of Marxism with the Marxism of Marx and Lenin. The rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat as represented by the party should not and does not logically lead to a rejection of the fundamental tenets of Marx's system itself. However, Roy's fears regarding the dictatorship of one party are real and raise the question as to whether Lenin's theory of party is relevant today.

In conclusion then the question that Roy raises are relevant, the spirit is right, but his alternative formulations are rather philosophically speaking weak. As a result he seems to operate on the utopian terrain rather than on a realist one.
Roy withdrew from active politics, to the study and propagation of a renaissance, but which remained essentially an intellectual activity. Roy thus emerges as an intellectual's intellectual. His role appears that of the educator of the educators who are to then educate the masses. Roy thus appears to be a man of public affairs, always participating in public debate or intellectual polemics. As a result Roy's image is neither that of a politician nor a revolutionary, but rather that of a political critic. Roy's effectivity as a political critic, however, was tremendous. His articles in *Independent India* and the *Humanist Way* are sharp and pointed, sparing none, which is why he was greatly admired by several of his contemporaries.

Though we appreciate Roy's spirit and his rather aggressive battle against superstition and mysticism, we must make a note of his lop-sided perception of the relation of science and freedom. For the relation between science and freedom is not a logical necessary relation. In the context of the present historical situation, the absurdity of this notion is revealed clearly. For though science and technology have progressed so tremendously, freedom is still far off.

Sudipto Kaviraj has very perceptively characterised Roy's intellectual efforts. According to him, "His (Roy's) work shows the aggression, historical optimism and the willingness to believe in hard-edged certainties characteristic of rationalists of an happier age."
To conclude, we would like to say that though Roy's system is not fullproof, this rebel intellectual highlighted some of the most relevant issues that need reconsideration, especially within Marxist theory. Though Roy may have been unsuccessful in tackling the questions raised, he has nevertheless performed the critical task in focussing our attention on these issues.
REFERENCES : CHAPTER V


2. Ibid. p. 170.


4. Ibid. p. 234.