CHAPTER II

A NOTE ON WORLD-VIEW AND WHOLISM

Article 1.

WORLD-VIEW

World-view is a multi-dimensional concept that has become very popular in contemporary social science parlance (1). In the discussions on the philosophy of science also this expression is quite in vogue (2). A close examination of the sense in which the word is being used by various writers in their respective areas of study reveals a lack of precision and clarity in its use. It appears to be one of the most equivocal of modern expressions and consequently a source of much confusion. One wonders whether it is going to share the fate of certain concepts that have become useful precisely because of their ambiguity (3). However, considering the extensive and varied use to which the term is put, it is essential to remove the ambiguity encircling it. Moreover, as world-view is the key expression in the present study, it is necessary to make its meaning and significance clear. So a brief discussion has to be undertaken here in order to clarify the precise sense in which the word world-view is proposed to be used in this thesis.

I. 1. 1. Meaning and conceptual framework

World-view came to be used as an equivalent to the German Weltanschauung (4). The Oxford English Dictionary gives its meaning as 'world-perception' and defines it as "a particular philosophy or view of life, a concept of the world held by an individual or group" (5). Such expressions as 'world-outlook', 'world-vision', 'cosmology', and 'paradigm' are also used synonymously by many writers; there are others who use 'philosophy of life' and 'total philosophy' as equivalent
A multi-dimensional concept having philosophical, anthropological and sociological connotations, world-view as a concept was first used in anthropological studies and Sol Tax is understood to be one of first writers to use it in a comprehensive sense. He defined 'world-view' as 'mental apprehension of reality' (7). The concept was further elaborated by Robert Redfield whose study of the primitive world-view is generally acclaimed as the first systematic elaboration of the concept of world-view. It may be mentioned here that Redfield distinguished world-view from cosmology and defined the latter as 'the systematic reflection of the specialised thinker' (8). Subsequently, the concept of world-view was systematically applied to the study of folk societies by anthropologists like Michael Mendelson (9).

II. 1. 2. Various definitions.

1. As already pointed out, being a multi-dimensional concept world-view has different nuances in the different branches of Social Science. So in order to grasp the full significance of the concept, it would be helpful to take a closer look at the various definitions given to it in the different branches of Social Science.

In Anthropology world-view means:

The system of VALUES, attitudes, and BELIEFS held by specific group. The German term Weltanschauung may also be employed with the same meaning. The concept has been important in the study of FOLK and PEASANT Societies . . . and is related in particular with the work of REDFIELD (1956). The stress on the importance of world-view and ideological factors in influencing response to CHANGE found in Redfield's work among others prefigured the interests of COGNITIVE ANTHROPOLOGY which, however, differentiates more carefully aspects of world-view such as cognitive systems, affective and attitude systems and action systems. The stress on the importance of world-view has been associated with CULTURAL RELATIVISM and has been criticised for its assumption that systems of values, beliefs and attitudes are unitary and shared by all members of the group (10).
The sociologists view the concept of world-view as follows:

A term used synonymously with world-vision and the German weltanschauung, world-view refers to the set of beliefs constituting an outlook on the world characteristic of a particular social group, be it social class, generation or religious sect. For example, the world-view of 19th century entrepreneur is said to comprise individualism, thrift, a sense of propriety, moral order and moderate religious devotion. Sociologists of knowledge will want to explain why a particular group holds a particular world-view. However, the analytical problem consists in what justification the sociologist has for putting particular elements into a world-view, for it will never be the case that all members of a group believe all elements of the world-view that is ascribed to them (11).

Roger Scrutton defines weltanschauung as "A general conception of the world, in which beliefs, values and metaphysical presuppositions are all woven together so as to instill the world with significance and facilitate the transition from thought to action" (12).

John Michell considers world-view to be "a natural philosophy, a humane, beneficial way of regarding and relating to the world, capable of uniting those who see the necessity for a new, stable relationship between civilized men and earth, and of effectively challenging the erroneous beliefs and assumptions which are now promoting world annihilation" (13).

II. 1. 3. 'Scientific' philosophy vs world-view

T.E. Hulme makes out some very relevant points about weltanschauung in his essay "Humanism and Religious Attitude" (14). After discussing what he calls 'the mixed nature' of philosophy, Hulme indicates the necessity of analysing philosophy into 'scientific' philosophy and weltanschauung (15). Citing Russell and Husserl, he entirely agrees with them in their insistence on drawing a clear distinction between scientific philosophy and weltanschauung (16). According to Hulme, scientific philosophy as exemplified by Husserl and Russell is a personal investigation of certain very abstract,
objective categories whereas weltanschauung is 'an attitude', 'an interpretation of life', 'a particular way of the relation of man to existence', 'an ideology from which every thing else springs', 'a central conception', 'a frame-work', within which one's moral beliefs are situated. Hulme is of the opinion that there is nothing hard and fast about a world-view. The categories of a weltanschauung are not inevitable in the way categories of space and time are; they simply make up one possible way of ordering our conception of reality (17). There can, therefore, be more than one weltanschauung and two weltanschauungen need not always be antithetical, they can be mutually supporting and complementary.

II. 1. 4. World-view as 'wisdom'

Hulme further argues that a weltanschauung is by no means necessarily connected with philosophy. The effort to find some interpretation of life, to solve what it feels to be the riddle of existence, is obviously a permanent characteristic of the human mind. It may find expression not only in philosophy, however, but in literature, where in a relatively formless way attempts may be made to deal with the relation of man to the world, and with all those questions, the answers to which used to be designated as 'wisdom' (18). There arises a situation in which for a variety of reasons an attitude to life becomes necessary and such an attitude appears. Gradually this attitude becomes firmly established. Once this new attitude is established, people who are under its influence 'want to fix it', i.e., 'to make it seem objective and necessary by giving it a philosophical setting'. They, then, endeavour to give the new attitude a universal validity 'by expressing it in the elaborately worked out categories of a metaphysics'. Philosophy, thus, provides a conceptual clothing for the interpretation of life current in any particular period (19).
This is what happened to the religious world-view as well as the humanistic/materialistic world-view, argues Hulme. He feels that this is a process which is repeated whenever the general interpretation of life changes. "At the end of such periods you get a constant phenomenon, the unsystematic philosopher. When the weltanschauung, the interpretation of life, changes the values expressed by the elaborate and subtle conceptual form of a developed philosophy no longer fit the changed conditions" (20). So people want what Husserl called a weltanschauung philosophy, i.e., 'an interpretation of life without the elaborate conceptual system of the older philosophy'. Hulme crowns his arguments with an insightful quote from Husserl:

A weltanschauung should be the highest possible exaltation of the life and culture of the period. The word 'wisdom' taken in its widest sense comes to mean the most perfect possible development of the idea of Humanity. Personality is to be developed to the greatest intensity in a many-sided activity - the result will be a philosopher in the original sense of the word... a weltanschauung can only spring from the highest possible development of personality (21).

Commenting on Hulme's conclusions, Richard Norman adds that a world-view is a 'new attitude towards life', 'a new conception of man', 'a new way of seeing things'; it includes 'a general conception of the nature of man and his relation to the world', 'a set of very general value judgements from which are deduced all the more specific moral judgements going to make up a particular morality' (22).

II. 1. 5. A comprehensive concept

In the light of the above survey of a cross-section of views on the meaning and implications of the concept of world-view, the following definition seems to be comprehensive and hence suitable for the purpose of a detailed investigation of Gandhi's world-view: Weltanschauung is a general conception of the nature of the world, particularly as
containing or implying a system of value principles. Any total philosophical system may be so styled which derives practical consequences from its theoretical component" (23). As the above discussions and definitions show a world-view has both theoretical and practical components. Theoretical component includes metaphysical presuppositions and value premises and the practical side is a natural extension of the theoretical base. In other words, it is the theoretical components that issue in action to form the praxis part of a world-view. It means that there is an integral relationship between the theoretical and practical components in a world-view and the practical while taking its origin in the theoretical fulfils the same by issuing in action.

II. 1. 6. Conformity of theory and practice.

This integral relation between the theoretical and practical aspects of world-view leads us, naturally, to the question of the affinity between philosophy and world-view. According to the above definition 'any total philosophy' may be called a 'world-view' provided its theoretical component has practical consequences, i.e., if the emphasis is not on theory but on action. It suggests that sans action, theory has no significance, no validity. It will be appropriate to quote here R.R. Diwakar's observation on the relationship between the theoretical and practical aspects of both science and philosophy: "... Science is abstract and ineffective without technology and philosophy is mere well spun thread, without the fabric of ethical action" (24). Admitting the argument that there is a value in following what is known as 'art for art's sake', 'science for science sake' and 'philosophy for philosophy's sake', R.R. Diwakar hastens to add:

... science without the development of technology is merely mechanical mathematics. It has no impact on life and brings no solution to the problems posed...
by life. Similarly philosophy without an ethical code of conduct based on the truth arrived at, is an intellectual exercise with, perhaps, the pleasure of logic added on. It is only barren theory producing no effect in life and offering no help to the progress and evolution of life and humanity (25).

II. 1. 7 Two traditions: intuitionistic and intellectual

This perspective on the conformity between theory and practice implied in the concept of world-view has a striking similarity to the Indian perception of the role of philosophy which is basically different from the western perception. Clarifying this distinction R.R Diwakar writes:

Philosophy had two different traditions... one is predominantly intuitionistic or mystic or inductive or religious (in a broad and non-ritualistic sense) and the other is predominantly intellectual or rational or logical. The former tradition has always laid stress on the way of life according to the dictates of the philosophy propounded. In fact, in that tradition philosophy and the discipline flowing from it are inalienable. The philosopher concerned is judged more by his discipline and conduct rather than his philosophical idea, concepts and theories. Therefore, this tradition is pragmatic and practical. The other concerns itself mainly with the concepts, ideas, logic and the philosophy in that tradition is judged by cogency, force of logic, and so on. The conduct and discipline of the philosopher in the latter tradition is not very relevant in judging his philosophy (26).

II. 1. 8. The Indian tradition: philosophy as darshan

Indian philosophy and philosophers, according to R.R Diwakar belong to the former tradition which he designates as the intuitionistic tradition (27). In Indian philosophy, the main emphasis is in the integral approach to truth which pervades life, and which when found or even in the process of finding must guide life itself. A philosophy which does not lead to a way of life and does not inspire the activities of life... has generally no attraction for the Indian mind" (28).

In India the impact of philosophy is not limited to the elite circle of intellectuals and academics, but its influence is pervasive. "The business of philosophy in India", writes Jawaharlal Nehru, "was not confined to a few philosophers or highbrows. Philosophy was an essential part of the religion...
of the masses: it percolated to them in some attenuated form and created that philosophic outlook which became nearly common in India as it is in China" (29).

While discussing the metaphysical foundations of Gandhi's thought, Surendra Verma too has emphasised this point:

In the Indian tradition 'philosopher in order to establish his philosophy must live it '. . . . The entire stress in Indian philosophy thus lies in the mode of living and the primary concern of the Indian philosopher has always been not merely information about nature and man but also transformation of life, a radical changing of man's nature. In this respect Indian philosophy leans towards religion in a far greater extent than does the critical secularised thinking of the West (30).

Thus, it is clear that the integral relationship between the theoretical and practical components is common to the concept of "world-view" and the Indian perception of philosophy. That is why the term *darshan* is used to denote philosophy in the Indian tradition. As Gandhian thinking is deeply rooted in the Indian tradition and as there is complete harmony between theory and practice in Gandhi, this similarity has an added significance in this study.

II. 1.9. The ultimate determinant

One more point which is relevant to the present study and vitally significant in any discussion on world-view also has to be examined here. And that relates to the question: what is it that ultimately determines a man to see the world one way rather than another? The question is a complex one in spite of its apparent simplicity, for it is likely to open up a pandora's box of philosophic conundrums (31). In an in depth analysis of this serious question Richard Norman suggests that 'experience' is what ultimately determines a man to see the world in one way or another. But as a person's experience is not subject to verification or

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confirmation in the traditional empiricist sense, how can one say that this experience is authentic? Norman argues that the experience is authentic because the experience in question is 'not a passive recording of an object, or perceptual data', 'the passive awareness of an object, but is primarily activity'. It is not the object of experience but 'the nature of the experience itself, the relation which it involves between the self and its world which provides the verification'. Norman also adds: "I can only add that whether or not this kind of 'verification by experience' appears philosophically acceptable, it is what does happen. This just is the form that people's moral development characteristically takes" (32).

a) Authority of experience

Another perspective on the authenticity of experience is available in an analysis by Metropolitan Paul Gregorios:

But even in the matter of experience, a distinction should be made between private experience and a repeatable, demonstrable, public experiment. The authority of private experience does not have compelling authority except for the one who experiences it. But both in private experience and public experiments, there is a chain of reasoning which interprets the meaning and significance of the event. Experience by itself is not authoritative, but only in combination with logical reasoning and the clarification of alternative possibilities. We should not say that experience has any authority apart from its interpretation. But it is one thing to question the facticity of an experience and another to challenge its interpretation. Both the facticity of the event and the validity of the interpretation are necessary to establish the authority of experience (33).

b) Correspondence of experience and world-view

Another view concerning the relation between world-view and experience is expressed by Ali Shariati. He seems to believe that the way a person receives an experience depends wholly on how he views the world and 'as men we
are what our world-visions are' is his cryptic conclusion (34). But he makes no attempt to establish his contention except to say in passing that "the external world in an individual's eye is a picture of his society as well as his social class standing reflected in the mirror of reality and subjectivity" (35). However, Shariati, does not deny the fact that practical orientation is the vital factor in a world-view.

c) Experience and commitment

Coming back to the question of the authenticity of a person's experience, it must be clear from the preceding discussion that it is verifiable in terms of how it manifests in his actions. Experience, if it is authentic, will invariably motivate a person to act in a way that is in consonance with his experience. His relation to the world and fellow human beings will certainly bear the impress of the transforming experience through the transformation of his conduct. That is why Richard Norman says that a world-view has to make sense of one's experience taken as a whole and that 'a commitment to one or another view is demanded' (36). He also adds that "to assert the validity of a particular world-view is to express one's own commitment on the basis of one's experience" (37).

II. 1. 10. An evaluation

A word of explanation about the relevance of the preceding discussion to the proposed study is called for here.

(i) From the various definitions of world-view and the explanations thereof, we are to infer that a detailed investigation of a person's world-view must include, among other things, an analysis of his views about the Ultimate Reality, the external world (Nature), human nature, the purpose of life and man's relation to the world and one another
and also about the way of life which embraces all human activities. On the theoretical side a world-view presupposes a metaphysics and on the practical side a comprehensive model or scheme for organising every department of human life in the light of the theoretical perceptions and both these elements need to be explored in a study of a world-view. Such an exploration is what is intended to be attempted in the following pages of the thesis.

(ii) The discussion on the question 'what is it that ultimately determines a man to adopt a particular world-view' is included because the views mentioned there are of a representative character and are greatly relevant in any analysis of Gandhi's world-view. How did Gandhi develop or arrive at a particular world-view for himself while living in the vortex of a materialistic civilization in which even traces of such a view were conspicuous by their absence. Is what T.E. Hulme says - a weltanschauung is not consciously adopted, but it is absorbed unconsciously from one's social and cultural environment (38) - applicable in the case of Gandhi? What role has 'experience' i.e., a transforming experience that leads one to conversion, played in converting him to his particular way of beholding the world? In order to arrive at genuine answers to these and related questions it is necessary to investigate Gandhi's life, the various influences on him, and his inner evolution through the traumas and travails of life culminating in the final stage at which he holds a world-view that is integral and dynamic (39). This is a potential area for research. What is proposed in the present study is not a detailed investigation of how Gandhi arrived at his world-view, but an exploration of Gandhi's weltanschauung as it is, with the objective of bringing out the interconnection between its various components, in other words to explicate its
integral, wholistic nature. The all too brief survey of the related issues was attempted only to indicate the scope for further research.

**Article 2.**

**WHOLISM**

II. 2. 1. Why wholism?

The second key concept that needs clarification is wholism. In the introduction we found that one of the reasons why both the predominant world-views failed was due to the over emphasis each put on any one of its components. The consequences of such distortions were, indeed, tragic. This approach during the pre-enlightenment phase of religious world-view manifested in apriorism (40) in which the importance of analytical method and the verification of ideas on the touchstone of every day experiences of an existential kind were almost totally devalued. During the phase of modern scientific/mechanical world-view, the pendulum swung to the other extreme where everything was split up into its parts and examined separately ignoring the vital fact that the parts constitute a whole and this approach culminated in what is known as 'reductionism' (41). As the over emphasis on any particular aspect to the neglect of the others is likely to load to reductionism (42), and the consequent hazards. It is vital that the alternative world-view that we search for or try to create anew is free from this defect. That is precisely why wholism is underlined.

II. 2. 2. A definition

It is therefore, necessary to clarify the term 'wholism' and make clear what it stands for. Anthony Quinton defines wholism thus:

The thesis that wholes, or some wholes are more than the sums of their parts in the sense that the wholes in question have characteristics that cannot be explained in terms of the properties and RELATIONS to
one another of their constituents. ORGANICISM is a particular version of holism, which is founded on the analogy of complex systems in general with what are literally organisms, whose parts lose their nature, function, significance and even existence when removed from their organic interconnection with the rest of the organism. Holism is central to IDEALIST theories of the state and other social INSTITUTIONS, to many accounts of the special unity and integrity of works of art, and to the theory of science advanced by Quine, according to which science is not an assemblage of isolable bits of belief but an interconnected system which is adjusted as a whole to the deliverances of experience. Holism is hostile to the philosophical technique of ANALYSIS which it conceives to be a falsifying mutilation of what it is applied to (43).

II. 2. 3. 'Holism' and science

David Bohm makes a brilliant attempt to scientifically explain and justify the concept of holism by describing it in terms of holograms in holography (44). Bohm's concern is indicative of the very keen interest the world of science takes in getting out of the quagmire of reductionism and in saving knowledge from being mutilated further. It again bears testimony to the fact that developing a wholistic approach to all issues connected with life and all aspects of life is of vital significance.

II. 2. 4. The two theses

To sum up, the two main theses of wholism are (1) the whole is more than its parts (2) wholes have their own distinct aims and purposes. Though apparently simple, wholism as a concept has far reaching implications (45).

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. While defining world-view Antony Quinton writes: "It is common for important but comparatively local scientific discoveries or conjectures to be generalised into total systems of this kind, for example, those of


5. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, Supplement Vol. IV. Tracing the evolution of the word, the entry continues: "1934: M. Bodkin in *Archetypal Pattern In Poetry* (P.326): "A man's philosophy...is his Weltanschauung - the individual vision; or perspective of reality. There are references like "both Catholicism and National Socialism are Weltanschauungen (1938 - E. Quinn *Mission of Austria-III* - 30), astrological Weltanschauung (1952, G. Sarton - *History of Science* I. IV. 121) and Christian Weltanschauung (1958 - J. Joes *Theology of Election* I)."


8. Ibid.


10. Charlotte Seymour Smith, *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*, Macmillan, 1986, p. 291. The concept of world view in anthropology has created some analytical problems also like the insider's view vs the outsider's view and also the question of whether all members of a group share the same world-view etc.


15. Ibid., p. 24.

16. Ibid., p. 28. "Weltanschauung-Philosophie und Wissenschaftliche Philosophie als zwei in gewisser Weise aufeinander bezogene aber nicht zu vermengenden Ideen ..." (Weltanschauung-philosophy and Scientific-philosophy..."
differentiate themselves sharply as two ideas which are to a certain extent inter-related but never mixed up).


19. Ibid., p. 25.


22. Ibid., pp. 319 - 330.


25. Ibid., p. 17.

26. Ibid., It has to be pointed out here that R.R Diwakar does not approve of such division as Eastern and Western thought.

27. Ibid., p. 18.

28. Ibid., p. 19.


31. For a brief discussion of the related issues which we don't intend to examine here, see Richard Norman's article "On Seeing Things Differently", in The Philosophy of Society, Op. cit.

32. Ibid., p. 338.

33. T. Paul Verghese, Freedom and Authority CLS, Madras, 1974, pp. 35 - 36. (T. Paul Verghese is now H.G Metropolitan Paul Gregorios).

34. Ali Shariati, Op. cit., p. 19. Referring to Albert Camu's famous novel Plague Shariati cites the responses of the priest who holds a religious world-view, the materialist who decides to co-operate with the others though he holds the world to be stupid and meaningless, and the absurdist (probably the author's double and mouth-piece) who wants to remove God from the world so that every action will become legitimate, to the plague that haunts the town of Oran and hints that every response, reaction hangs on our world-vision.
35. Ibid., p. 10
37. Ibid., p. 340.

39. Gandhi did not believe that he reached a final stage. The goal, the Ideal, was always receding, never realizable in this life, like Euclid's point - a metaphor which he was particularly fond of. Inner growth, for Gandhi, being a process of creative evolution will culminate in self fulfilment which is complete merger with the Absolute.

40. "... An apriorist holds either or both of the following opinions (1) that the mind is constitutionally endowed with CONCEPTS or IDEAS which it has not derived from experience, (2) that there is knowledge which does not depend for its justification on experience and yet which is still substantially informative and not merely verbal or ANALYTIC in character... More loosely an apriorist is one who ascribes large powers for the discovery of new knowledge to pure reasoning, unassisted by experience. The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, Op. cit., p. 32.

41. For a detailed discussion of how reductionism permeated all areas of knowledge and the damages it did to the respective disciplines see Fritjof Capra's The Turning Point, Op. cit., pp. 93-281.

42. It is not hard to see that a priorism is a reductionism of sorts.


44. David Bohm, Wholeness and the Implicate order, London. See the chapter "Implicate Order".


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