

This manuscript transcribes parts of a journal kept, primarily during my junior year at Princeton (1959-1960). I made the transcription prior to 1977, probably circa 1971 or 1972, possibly earlier. (11/12/2007)

Life occurs in a continual present. The traditional trichotomy of past, present, and future distorts our actual temporal relationships. The present is concrete. The present is immediate; it is "subjective" for it is experienced by living life: *seeing*, feeling, tasting, smelling, and thinking, even our immediate thoughts of far ancient Athens, perhaps of Socrates's last moment of reflection before the hemlock. The past and future are abstract. The past exists for us through those thoughts of Socrates. The thought is immediate to us, ^{is not} ~~not~~ Socrates. He is "over there", known to us as the room on the other side of the wall, as an abstraction. The future also only exists to us in the form of immediate thoughts. The future, itself, is also "over there", like a room someplace where I have never been. I surmise that it is there, but, as soon as I go to look, it loses its feature of future-ness--someplace where I have never been. Thus looking out from any present, any now, the past and the future can only be experienced mentally;

they are really facets of the present. They are thoughts about other presents: those which have been and those which have not been--both are radically different from that which is.

Conscious life is localized in time as emphatically as in space. We move through the present. The "future" is continually becoming the "past". In other words, possibilities are continually being transformed into actualities. From the human point of view this transformation is based upon the choices made in the present. Past choices are irrevocable, we can not return. Future choices are wholly indeterminate. Our choices and acts made in a never resting concrete present transmit the future possibility into a past reality. In respect to the past or actualized presents, everything is determined. Men are slaves towards the past. With respect to the future nothing is determined, in respect to it man is absolutely free and absolutely responsible. Everything turns on the concrete choice he makes in the concrete present. He is free because he is faced with pure possibility--he can try to do whatever he wishes. He is responsible because the consequences of any choice he makes devolve irrevocably upon himself. Once a choice has become a past present no intercession can erase the choice.

There are four types of choice: biological choice, unconscious or subconscious choice, conscious or individual

choice, and social choice.

Biologic choice is a proto-choice essentially based on chemical mechanism and the laws of probability. But regardless how mechanistic or probabalistic the process is, it is choice in the sense of differing possibilities in the future being transformed into a single actuality in the past by the operation of a living being. Catching a cold we usually don't think of as chosen. But even on the biologic level it is, for the being has means with which to combat the virus. Alternatives exist, the outcome is uncertain until determined. All colds we might have caught go unnoticed. Those we catch we lament, and await the discovery of the cure of the common cold.

Unconscious choice is closer to our traditional concept of choice. Yet still we hesitate to include such uncontrollable factors in our repertory of choice. Nevertheless it belongs there. Our instinctive reaction to a flame is technically a choice. We could leave our hand in the flame or pull it out ^{at} a variety of speeds and motions. We might jump with our whole body or just withdraw our hand by moving our arm. This multiplicity of alternatives must be narrowed and we do it by choosing one and not the others and acting upon that choice. It all happens before we are really conscious of the heat; yet it happened, possibility was chosen into actuality, future became past.

Personal choice is the most obvious of the categories. To write these words I must make an extended and complex series of choices. The range of marks that could go upon the page is immense. I must choose. Everything we consciously do is done by such choices--this choice or that choice. I can get out of this chair, put down my pen; but no, continue to write. You, in disgust can throw down this paper and do something else. The range of possibilities confronting me at any now is great. We narrow and choose and concentrate on a single possibility for action, for transmission into the vast past of that which has been.

It is important to note the freedom inherent in choice. Choice is always free because it is always in reference to the "future", the indeterminate present, the realm of possibility. We can choose anything that can be chosen, no matter how absurd or impossible it is. Shall I jump to the moon? Why not? There is nothing in the future that prevents me from choosing to attempt it. But this freedom is balanced by an equally total responsibility. Choice is the future looking half of life. Action is the past oriented half. Action relates to determination. Having chosen our possibility from the future, we try to act this possibility into the past. If our choice is illfounded, our action will confront the inhospitability of the past. Here responsibility befalls us. Once acted a facet of the

realm of indeterminates enters the realm of determinates and its outcome is irrevocable. An absurd choice must submit to the consequences. While I am free to choose to leap to the moon, I can not avoid tumbling back to earth after an ascent of two feet or so. I am free because the future is not determined; I am responsible because the past is determined. Whatever befalls me was done by my choice for which I am responsible. This is our relation to the continual present: at any time we are confronted by a multiplicity of potential presents among which we cannot avoid choosing and acting and making ^{one a} part of the determined past. The only thing we cannot do is avoid making a choice. It is the basic condition of existence. Even total apathy is a choice; the absence of choice is death. This freedom and responsibility of choice underlies the conditions of social choice and the relationship of the individual to social choice. But before examining social choice we should look at the concept of society. What is society?

Although there is a science of society, the definition of it has never been satisfactory. Society is a grouping of individuals for some purpose. So defined, one must qualify it with adjectives before one can work with it: American society, European society, Western society, high society, mass society, The Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals, traditional society, modern society, etc. This proliferation is very difficult to reduce to order.

Societies, viewed externally, require a localization in time and space. What is the internal view of this localization? From inside, a society is closely connected to choice. A society requires that certain choices are made in common and the results are suffered or enjoyed in common among individuals. From the inside, the perspective of a member individual, a society is defined by social choices or choices in common. We are still far from relating all the multiplicity of societies, but to do this we need to examine the process of social choice, hoping eventually that the relation between the American society and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will become clearer.

Social choice occurs when two or more individuals contribute by their personal choices to making a common choice with consequences for each. From the perspective of either ^d the individuals, social choice involves the same freedom and the same responsibility as personal choice.

Let us postulate a simple example: that of two persons. I am sitting at a restaurant musing upon the inevitability of choice. I place a nickle upon the table before me and discover the nickle presents three basic alter-

natives: acceptance, rejection, or apathy. I can choose to pocket the coin, throw it away, or let it sit. I choose the latter, a choice not to choose, and instead go to get another cup of coffee. While I am gone you pass by and see the nickel, immediately choose to take it. When I return the nickel is gone; a social choice has been made. Both made free choices, both are responsible for the consequences to them. A social choice has consequences for two or more people.

It is now time to ask how social choice is made. A moment's reflection will point out that we are every moment beset by a fantastic number of possibilities. We can stand, sit, call one of innumerable friends on the telephone, read one of many books, look out the window, or embark upon a trip. Obviously we are in need of some help in making our choices. The number of different possibilities for choice at any moment on the biologic, subconscious, conscious, and social level is paralytic without some aid. This aid is traditions of choice. The cell has its genes, a long tradition which normally makes its choices for it. The subconscious has its instincts, the consciousness has its personality, built up as a tradition over the past lifetime.

Traditions of choice are made up of a body of past experience that implies that certain possibilities when chosen

usually have certain results which have not been disastrous. Most of our choices are made by the use of tradition.

The sphere of life is composed of a vast pyramid of traditions of choice. This edifice starts on the biologic level with its myriads of cells each containing its genes and chromosomes which direct its choices. These are concentrated into innumerable beings, plants and animals; which, according to their organization, form an increasing complexity of biologic choice that ascends into subconscious choice in the higher animals. One group of these, man, rises one step higher, to consciousness. Here traditions of choice are no longer mechanistic, but are willed, the tradition itself is chosen, developed slowly through the forming of personalities and interests through repeated, free, senseless choices. Among these choices, or from these choices, are wrought traditions of social choice where men freely enter into mutual choices, building another hierarchy of choice traditions through which immense energies are directed.

Society is composed of this pyramid of traditions of social choice. A society corresponds to a tradition of social choice. Perhaps its lowest level is the family, each of which has its distinctive personality, its normal way of doing things, its tradition. But the members of the family do not always act within that tradition. The father works

and there he enters into another tradition. The mother serves the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the PTA and there she enters into other traditions. The children attend school and have their circle of friends. The family lives in a town, in a state, in a nation which has international relations with a tradition of choice for this level called a foreign policy.

It is by these traditions of social choice that people band together to accomplish things beyond the realm of probable possibility of the isolated individual. I, alone, fail miserably in jumping to the moon. I, combined with millions of others, can choose with some success to hurl one of our group to the moon.

Now it would appear that if most choices are made by tradition, the whole would be quite repetitive. But this is not the case. The parts, parsons and subsidiary societies, are continually making choices. Our consent to tradition is itself a choice which at any time need not be made. In fact, it is frequently not made; and here the dynamics of life arise. We encounter the effect of differential change.

To grasp the full significance of differential change it will be helpful to build up to it starting from the individual looking out from a location in the continual present. The universe is a vast web of relationships. The individual knows neither himself nor objects. He experiences

only relationships between himself and various increments of totality(including himself). The brain is a relator. The primary senses give relationships between the taster, our taste buds and nerves, with the taste, a succulent apple or a sour lemon. Introspection is a relationship of the conscious mind now looking at itself then: introspection is made possible only by the mental realization that one has changed over time, that one is not now precisely what one was then or need be in the future. On the opposite side we have the vast relationship of any individual to space-time.

Our movement in time is indicated by change. We have the very precise measure of temporal movement in the regular change in our relationship with the heavenly bodies. We have our very imprecise measure of personal temporal movement in those dull days that drag compared with the dynamic days that hurry on. People in primitive cultures who experience little change, and then only cyclical change, have a completely different concept of their temporal relationships: they circle endlessly on a temporal ring, always returning to a place they were before and will be again.

It is important now to call attention to a feature of our journey in the continual present called life. We do not move in time with a uniform rate. If movement in time must be defined as a change in relationships then it is

apparent that the "rate of time" has meaning only by relating the choice that effects change on one level to the choice on another level. The electrical pattern in the brain can change many times in the time it takes me to go from here to there. Likewise, I can go from here, New York, to there, San Francisco, many times in the time it took some youth bent on discovering gold in 1848. Change does not take place uniformly in different areas of existence. The choices that produce change in some areas are more efficient than those in other areas. We have been able to choose to carry out important changes in some areas, say medical practices and transportations, while other areas, attitudes toward certain minorities have not changed. This lack of uniformity creates differential change.

Differential change is a powerful mechanism that keeps traditions of choice in a continual state of equilibrium. A major change in one sector of society or in one sub-society reverberates through the whole, creating strains on traditions of choice, eliciting innovations in all areas. The major source of differential change in our society seems to be the scientific method. The scientific tradition is organized as a self-correcting tradition of choice. The scientific method leads to evermore predictable, efficacious choices in respect to the subject it can be applied to. It will be necessary in a later part, not yet done, to show that science

changes character when applied to too sophisticated choice processes. In areas where choices are basically mechanistic the scientific technique is essentially liberating because it enables the judging mind, the conscious chooser, to control the choosing mechanism for ends beyond the comprehension of the mechanism. But this liberating character turns into a narrowing character when the scientific method is applied to processes based essentially on qualitative judgment. Instead of being a tool for the conscious chooser to control a mechanism, it becomes a mechanism for an unconscious chooser to control the conscious. Thus psychology bases its analysis on the study of the subconscious and applies it to the conscious. In this way it replaces the faggots that once punished dissenters with many standardized tests and tools that accomplish with less stench the organizational requirement of reproducing itself. The mechanistic affinity of organization and the qualitative affinity of love still compete. Because of the high degree of interrelation between various traditions of social choice, these self-induced changes in the scientific sector introduce a differential change in the whole, which introduces obsolescence in nonscientific sectors. Differential change distorts the relationships between traditions of choice and traditional choices cease to elicit traditional results. As differential change progresses the distortion increases. The equilibrium of the

whole will be maintained. Or lastly, apathy will reign and the progressive will progress while the rest stagnates; distortion in the fabric of the whole will increase until it breaks the cohesive bonds and anarchy arises.