

## IN SEARCH OF JUSTICE

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is probably the  
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We are neither philosophical nor  
historical contemporaries of the present day  
Andrew Nash

I INTRODUCTION: Turner's life was characterised by a rational approach to issues and a respect for persons and for this reason his life stands in tragic contrast to the act of violence which terminated it.

II LIFE AND DEATH: Francis Wilson: "To honour Richard Turner as he should be honoured we must continue the dialogue about justice in which he participated so passionately himself." This dialogue is of great importance at a time of polarisation in a violent society "where men like Rick can be murdered to keep them out of the debate about our future" (D. Hurley).

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IV CRITICAL COMMENTS: Exploration of various tensions in Turner's thinking: 1. The tension between his choice for rationality and the "irrationalities" of the political situation. Social criticism through discovery, invention or interpretation. 2. Utopian in opposition to realistic thinking. 3. Tension between a master key and the rich texture of society. 4. Tension between freedom and historical context. "The structure of consciousness, a continual project in the future, is such that it can never be bound to anything" (Turner). This view of consciousness is a-structural, a-historical, and a-social. A-structural, because he does not realise that languages or sign-systems structure consciousness. A-historical, since he lacks the insight that the present is the dialectical relationship between past and future. A-social, for by operating with a concept of consciousness which is a continual project into the future with no roots in the past he excludes the role of organisation in "transforming the goals of that consciousness into historical reality".

V CONCLUSION: The role of philosophy in helping us to understand the historical task of emancipation from all kinds of domination. Turner's philosophy was an endeavour not only to relate philosophy to history but also to relate history to philosophy. He struggled with the difficult problem of how to become a philosophical and historical contemporary of his time. Crucial to this insight is an understanding of "how our history forms our consciousness without making consciousness a mere expression of its history, but leaving it an active role in choosing its future" (Nash).

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I

Introduction

"If a man happened to be 36 years old, as I happen to be, and some truth stands before the door of his life; some great opportunity to stand up for that which is right and that which is just, and he refuses to stand up because he wants to live longer, or he is afraid his home will get bombed, or he is afraid that he will lose his job, or he is afraid that he will get shot, he may go on and live until he is 80... and then the cessation of breath is merely the belated announcement of an early death of the spirit. A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right. A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true. So, we are going to stand up right here... letting the world know that we are determined to be free."

Richard Turner was assassinated in Durban on 8 January 1978 and these words written by Martin Luther King were read at the memorial service. In commemorating the tenth anniversary of his tragic death at this conference I would like to pay tribute to Rick Turner by stating, firstly, that his life exemplified the Socratic dictum "an unexamined life is not worth living"; secondly, that his untimely death was the result of his decision to stand up, courageously and compassionately, for that which is just; and thirdly, that his philosophy has a quality which merits our serious attention. His life was characterised by a rational approach to issues and a respect for persons and for this reason his life stands in tragic contrast to the act of violence which terminated it. In this paper I intend looking at his political philosophy and at its implications for

his own life and perhaps for our lives in so far as we relate our philosophy to the theory and practice of politics.

## II

### Life and death

In this section I concentrate on a few crucial periods in Turner's life as related by Tony Morphet in his introduction to the second edition of The Eye of the Needle. Turner, born in Cape Town in 1941, registered as first year student at the University of Cape Town in 1959. The years 1959 and 1960 were important years in the history of the struggle of the open universities to maintain their autonomy. Apartheid in education was enforced on university level and the open universities responded through protests. These protests failed but at least one positive result was that students became aware of the political dimensions of university life.

Another decisive event was the shootings at Sharpeville in March 1960. The national crisis which followed demonstrated the great divide between black and white, the level of frustration among the blacks, the repressive power of the government, and the importance of white opposition groups. Turner was involved in NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) but he did not commit himself to violent action.

In 1964 Turner went to France, enrolled at the University of Paris and worked on the political philosophy of Sartre. Crucial for his own development is the Sartrean insight that man has no fixed nature since he is a continual project into the future. On his return to South Africa he used the Socratic method in teaching philosophy. He befriended Steve Biko in 1970 at the University of Natal and became a "sympathetic critic" of the Black Consciousness movement. He was also critical of sectarianism and radicalism amongst students and criticised student riots arguing that

"students should do some thinking instead". For him there is no liberating practice without informed theory. While working on the SPROCAS programme (Special Programme for Christian Action in Society) in the 1970's he criticised the limitations of the liberal paradigm and produced his own Sartrean reflection on the South African society, published in 1972 under the title of The Eye of the Needle.

However, not only Sartre's influence is present in this book but also Turner's involvement in the black trade union movement in Durban. He initiated programmes of research in which students gathered damning information about conditions in the factories, and also organised the workers themselves, educating them into questioning their world. He played a role in establishing the Institute for Industrial Education and the South African Labour Bulletin, propagating the formation of strong black trade unions.

Since Sharpeville in 1960 the working-class in South Africa was weak and disorganised, "but only eight months after the publication of this book, a massive wave of strikes in Durban, which extended from January to March 1973, signalled the beginning of an upsurge of worker militancy in South Africa which has yet to show any sign of subsiding" (Nash, 1982:5). He initiated a study of the Durban strikes but was banned in February 1973. Using the opportunity to do research on Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Sartre and Althusser, he explored the role of the human subject in the context of history.

What happened then is related by Tony Morphet (1980) as follows: "He had been under close surveillance throughout the period of his banning which was due to expire in March 1978. In January 1978 his wife Foszia visited Botswana and on passing the border post caught the attention of control

officers. She was searched and harassed in a manner which suggested more than usual suspicion. That night at midnight an unknown gunman knocked at Turner's front door and, on his investigating the knock, shot him dead through a side window.

Police promised investigations but such dilatory steps as have been taken have yielded no evidence of any kind. The logic of the life situation I have described leads towards a conclusion which is difficult to avoid. Many people felt that he was assassinated by a person who was acting in the name or interest of the state power. It was the imposition of the ultimate limit beyond which no physical transcendence was possible."

One cannot merely talk about the life and death of Richard Turner and leave it at that, for his thinking was mainly a concern about justice with the primary focus on South Africa. In the words of Francis Wilson (1978:82): "To honour Richard Turner as he should be honoured we must continue the dialogue about justice in which he participated so passionately himself." And this dialogue is of great importance at a time of polarisation in a violent society "where men like Rick can be murdered to keep them out of the debate about our future" (Hurley, 1972: 94). One way of honouring him and keeping the debate alive is to take his philosophy seriously. In this paper I intend analysing his political philosophy on the basis of his arguments as formulated in The Eye of the Needle.

### III

#### The Eye of the Needle

##### 3.1 Utopian thinking

Turner uses the concept of utopian thinking in a dialectical way in order to encourage a critical attitude to the existing society enabling the citizen to discover the implicit assumptions of traditional patterns of behaviour. This leads to the insight that, for example, racism, sexism and capitalism are not "imperatives of human nature" but patterns

of behaviour which represent sets of values which could be changed. In changing our values we change our behaviour patterns which brings about a change in the structure of society. Unfortunately people are inclined to take a thought-style for granted and consequently they are not willing to introduce a second reflection which would enable them to look critically at their own position. This second reflection is described by Turner as theorising about society. Theory enables us not to take our present society for granted but to grasp the present as history. To grasp the present as history entails the following insights: that societies change through time; that progress has an ambivalent nature since the movement from irrationality to rationality contains much that is irrational; that our society is subject to change, and that we can bring about change by criticising irrationalities in society.

### 3.2 Two human models

In his analysis of the South African society in its historical context Turner introduces two models, the capitalist human model and the Christian human model. In capitalism some people control the means of production enabling them to exploit those who have no choice but to work for the owners. Exploitation is reinforced by accumulation and consumption. The human model of capitalism is defined in terms of the assumption that "human beings fulfil themselves by owning, accumulating, or consuming material goods" (Turner, 1980:15). Turner (1980:16) does not moralise about an assumed personal defect in the capitalist, but emphasises the structural nature of the asymmetrical relation of power in capitalism: "Exploitation is not a function of the good or ill will of the particular capitalist. It is a structural relation between capitalist and worker. And precisely because it is a structural relation the capitalist (and often the workers too) take it for granted and so do not realise that they are responsible for it. And it is the structural relationship that places limitations on human community."

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In connection with this distinction between individual intention and structural relationship he distinguishes between internal morality and transcendent morality. Internal morality does not challenge the structure, but emphasises the purity of motives and actions within a given social system. Transcendent morality challenges the structure and looks critically at the human model implicit in the social system into which individuals are socialised. The primary role of religion is to introduce the concept of transcendence which negates the assumed finality of a particular state of affairs. Religion as the practice of transcendence gives a positive meaning to the notion of the present as history since an ability to change the present is ascribed to the human being who is not only a product of historical processes but who is equally capable of producing history.

The Christian human model is an example of transcendent morality which enables man to question taken-for-granted patterns of behaviour. Christianity is not an "other worldly" religion but rather a "this worldly" religion since the myth of the incarnation places the Transcendent in history as a symbol of the possibility of a way of life which is not based on selfishness but on a concern for the need of others. It is a choice for persons rather than things as precondition for being human, and it rejects a system which turns persons into things in order to exploit them.

### 3.3 Culture and conflict

The clash between European culture and African culture in South Africa since 1652 is described by Turner in terms of the process of conquest since the European immigrants defined their own presence in South Africa by means of a dichotomy structured as civilised-uncivilised. The whites succeeded in dominating the whole subcontinent by means of military power. This formed the basis of inequality between white and black and the introduction of a

cheap black labour force. When necessary white workers and white employers joined forces and the position of the white worker was entrenched by establishing a collective bargaining system that excluded all Africans, by legalising the colour bar on the mines, and by protecting the acquisition of skills as a white preserve.

The clash between European and African cultures should therefore not be seen in merely cultural terms but also in economic and political terms. Turner admits that cultural conflicts can arise, for example, a clash based on conflicting language interests, but this kind of conflict should be distinguished clearly from the clash of material interests. He admits the role of race and class in the history of South Africa but keeps on reminding us that cultural conflicts are secondary to "the major black-white confrontation over wealth".

### 3.4 Participatory democracy

According to the ideology of participatory democracy individuals should be involved in the decisionmaking processes which affect their daily lives. It is based on the belief that interests of individuals can best be served by a rational mode of political life. And since justice can only be achieved if relations between people are based on reason, political philosophy has an important role to play in democracy in so far as it contributes to a rational understanding of society.

Participatory democracy is defined by Turner (1980:34) as follows: "a social system that enables individuals to have maximum control over their social and material environment, and encourages them to interact creatively with other people". Trade unions are useful in organising workers to acquire power at their place of work, but since management remains in power the worker cannot exercise his autonomy. In order to achieve this



full worker control is necessary. This entails regular meetings of all workers where all issues will be discussed, also the question of what to do with profits. Final responsibility for the regulations of labour relations will be concentrated in an elected workers' council but the enterprise could be broken up into smaller units to secure better participation in a plurality of manageable contexts.

Turner (1980:39) admits that this sounds too idealistic but this is only because we have been socialised into a social system with hierarchies which make participation as an educational process impossible. However, without participation no development towards autonomy. "It is only if the workers participate in the control of the central part of their lives - their work - that they can develop the personal qualities of autonomy, initiative, and self-confidence necessary for our human model. Workers' control is not only a means whereby I can control a specific area of my life. It is an educational process in which I can learn better to control all areas of my life and can develop both psychological and interpersonal skills in a situation of co-operation with my fellows in a common task."

### 3.5 The politics of socialism

Workers' control is one example of how participatory democracy operates. According to Turner (1980:49) it is only a necessary condition for individual freedom not a sufficient condition. To arrive at a sufficient condition, all the associations in society must be co-ordinated. "We must decide as a group what our priorities are, what we intend to use our resources for, and precisely how we are to depend on one another. We need to co-ordinate those of our actions through which we affect one another, we need to plan our society in such a way as to give us the maximum amount of freedom in our private lives." Since the citizen cannot trust the plurality of different power centres in a liberal democracy to ensure his freedom and since the competition of various interest groups takes place within "the

unquestioned context of a capitalist power structure", he needs "the one power centre of a socialist society".

Turner admits that both capitalist and socialist societies limit the freedom of citizens and therefore the absence of limitations cannot be the criterion for freedom. "We must define a free society as one in which (a) the limits are as wide as possible; (b) all individuals have a say in deciding where it is necessary for those limits to be; and (c) all individuals know how and why they are being limited" (Turner, 1980: 53). The Soviet model of communism is not viewed by him as an alternative to capitalism. It is described as "a large, inefficient, and undemocratic state <sup>bureaucracy</sup> ~~democracy~~" in which there is no "popular participation, based on workers' control, in a context of political freedom" (Turner, 1980: 65).

### 3.6 Participatory democracy for South Africa

In applying his theory to South Africa it is clear that the removal of apartheid and racial discrimination will not suffice. What is needed is "a fundamental redistribution of wealth and of power". In order to achieve the redistribution of wealth a planned economy should take the place of a free-market economy. But this redistribution of wealth is only possible on the basis of a redistribution of political power. And because whites fear both kinds of redistribution they inevitably oppose fundamental change. Although he admits the role of racial and cultural differences in politics, he is convinced that these differences will have no conflict potential in a society in which the wealth gap has been bridged.

With regard to the distribution of political power he argues in favour of two social preconditions for political stability: firstly, "There should be

no sharp division into social groups with contradictory interests in a number of different spheres." And secondly, "the citizens should be adequately integrated into the political system" (Turner, 1980:79). Integration is difficult to achieve in a modern industrial society but by means of control over decision-making in a plurality of intermediate institutions between the individual and the government the citizen discovers how society works by taking part in it. Citizenship takes on a moral quality through the individual's "practical education of participation".

In order to contribute towards the creation of a social democracy Turner (1980:92-94) calls on all South Africans to work for change on three levels: on a personal level we must choose a way of life that "embodies a preference for people over things"; on a cultural level we must develop "a critique of dominant South African values"; and on an organisational level we must ensure that "all organisations we work in must be participatory rather than authoritarian".

### 3.7 The dynamics of the South African society

In his analysis of the dynamics of the South African society Turner discusses the following mechanisms of control used by the ruling group: military and police power, a legitimating ideology, the strategy of manipulating divisions, and the manipulation of displacement phenomena. With regard to state power he merely notes that the state needs more than normal powers to maintain the prevailing pattern of inequality, and concentrates on the more subtle ways of control. According to him the legitimating ideology is "the concept of the innate superiority of western civilisation" which is a more sophisticated way of expressing the underlying racism. This ideology does indeed play a role in white society but the important question is to what extent it influences the perceptions of blacks.

The third mechanism of control is the strategy of manipulating divisions

among the blacks. First, there are ethnic divisions between the African group, the so-called "Coloureds" and Indians, who experience apartheid in different ways which partly explains differences of interest. Racial prejudice between groups is quite common. The African group itself is divided into ethnic groups or tribal units. Negative stereotyping between these units exists and conflicts of interest arise.

Secondly, there are class divisions which occur within each group. These middle classes are self-perpetuating, have a different set of interests, and experience the injustices of apartheid in a different way. This status consciousness obstructs inter-class co-operation.

In the third place, geographical divisions also limit united political action. "Coloureds", Indians and Africans are concentrated in different regions. Furthermore, the Africans are divided according to their location in urban areas, rural areas and African homelands.

Fourthly, there are religious divisions within the "Coloured", Indian and African groups. One way of assessing their political significance would be to distinguish between political and apolitical religious communities.

The last mechanism of political control discussed by Turner (1980: 101) is the variety of displacement phenomena "whereby the dominated individuals displace their frustration and aggression onto objects other than the social system in which this frustration and aggression originate". Examples are the following: religious groups seen as "encapsulating supporting communities", leadership roles in breakaway churches, ethnic prejudices and phenomena such as crime, violence and alcoholism.

Although these mechanisms of control and divisions in society do not facilitate united action by the oppressed masses, Turner does not view them as unsurpassable.

obstacles to change. Of primary importance is that blacks should be made conscious of these divisions and the way in which they obstruct liberation and that they should not envisage a bloody revolution. Blacks and whites should not fall victim to polarisation but <sup>rather</sup> together build a just society. To achieve this, it is necessary to make a realistic assessment of all the obstacles on the road to a new dispensation and to tackle the real issues facing all sections of society.

### 3.8 In search of a strategy

In his discussion of the position of blacks in society and in his search for a strategy best suited to liberate blacks from oppression, he emphasises the following points:

1. The rate of industrial growth and the imbalance between "the growth levels in the white-dominated industrial areas and the pattern of development in the black rural areas" (Turner, 1980:112).
2. The atomisation of black individuals in an industrialised set-up and the equally atomised nature of their awareness that their problems have their roots in the socio-politico-economic organisation of society. Unfortunately, an atomised awareness has no political significance.
3. Since the banning of the major political organisation such as the ANC and the PAC in 1960 there has been no effective political organisation and therefore the political role of trade unions has increased. "The issue of politics is the distribution of resources within the community and a strong trade-union movement could play an important role in enabling the African group to force some sort of redistribution of resources within the community without necessarily having this conflict mediated through ordinary political institutions" (Turner, 1980:122).
4. The Black Consciousness movement has a limited political value since it

emphasises cultural rather than economic rights of blacks. Its main concern is the ending of discrimination and the integration of "the black community into the existing economic structures on a more equal footing" (Turner, 1980: 126). There are, however, valuable insights to be found in Black Consciousness, also for whites. "Black consciousness is a rejection of the idea that the ideal for human kind is 'to be like the whites'. This should lead to the recognition that it is also bad for whites 'to be like the whites'. That is, the whites themselves are oppressed in South Africa. In an important sense both whites and blacks are oppressed, though in different ways, by a social system which perpetuates itself by creating white lords and black slaves, and no full human beings" (Turner, 1972: 22).

5. White liberal institutions also lack a fundamental critique of the economic system and therefore the English-language press, the English universities and the Christian Church, along with the white opposition parties in parliament are unaware of the extent to which the life-style of whites are based on the exploitation of blacks.

6. Although international economic pressure is of great importance one should evaluate pressure in terms of its contribution to black economic power while keeping in mind the broader context of the hegemony of Western culture since these western countries all have capitalist socio-political systems in which the dominant economic interest groups play a disproportionate role in decision-making" (Turner, 1980: 147).

7. Blacks should not place too much hope on exiled groups such as the ANC and PAC. Although they have a symbolic value their acts of terror permit the government "to legitimate a wide variety of oppressive measures in South Africa. In a situation where rapid revolutionary transfer of power is not possible, it may be that groups using the rhetoric of revolution and organising doomed attempts at insurrection actually play a counter-productive

role. They confuse even further the already confused perceptions that the whites have of reality and inhibit the occurrence of fruitful compromises. This result is made more probable when they are led from exile by people who cannot possibly be in touch with the day-to-day reality of a continuously changing situation" (Turner, 1980: 151).

8. Since the white regime is too powerful to be overthrown by violent means, blacks should mobilise themselves on the basis of the potential economic power they have. The power of white South Africans "does not and cannot extend to a total control of the economic and social processes that generate and change the structure of power. As the economic significance of the urban African work force increases, so does the cost of maintaining control of that work force by brute strength. It is in terms of the changing network of power relationships implied by this fact that one has to construct a strategy for bringing about change towards a more just society in South Africa" (Turner, 1980: 151). Turner's choice of strategy is clearly against violence and in favour of the mobilisation of the urban African work force.

#### IV

##### Critical Comments

There are various tensions in Turner's political philosophy which is worth exploring.

4.1 First, there is a tension between his choice for rationality and the "irrationalities" of the political situation. This manifests itself in the context of the tension between reason and history, reason and social practice, reason and the historical context of the society in which we live. Turner shares the view of Habermas that a just society is a rational society but the difficult problem is how to relate reason to social practice. Both can be seen as social critics but one can be a social critic in various ways.

Following Walzer (1987) we can distinguish between three ways of doing moral philosophy: through discovery, invention, and interpretation. This can also be applied to social criticism: one can be a social critic by assuming that one can discover a divine or master plan in history, or by inventing one to impose on society, or by interpreting what is available in society through a dialogue with history. Reason is then not an a priori given which can be imposed on history but comes to light through the dialectic of conversation with history with the purpose of involving as many people as possible in this conversation. It is difficult to know where to place Turner on this spectrum. It is possible to find elements of all three approaches in his philosophy, but the most productive insights are those that relate to the method of interpretive social criticism, that is, interpreting society through a dialogue with history.

4.2 Another tension is present in his introduction of utopian thinking to counter realistic thinking. He convincingly criticises a kind of realism which assumes that the existing social order is immutable and that the predominant Western way of thinking about the world is natural and therefore universalisable. This, however, does not cover a realism which acknowledges the existence of a plurality of desires, interests and beliefs which have to be taken into account when speaking about politics in terms of negotiation and bargaining rather than in terms of conversion and redemption. The opposition Turner introduces between utopian and realistic thinking (in the second sense of the term) lacks, not only an insight into the conflictual nature of politics, but also into the historical dimension of politics. Politics can be described in various ways (Leftwich, 1986) but it should at least be seen as a practice and a procedure of negotiating a settlement between opposing viewpoints at a historical point in time. Politics does not consist of the conversion of the political actors in order to have them conform to the prescriptions of an utopian project. Methodologically utopianism is potent in providing a critical vantage point - it enables the participants to think



in terms of alternatives - but historically it is important because it cannot accommodate opposing view-points. Politics does not operate with abstract possibilities but with concrete possibilities which are historically determined. Turner's criticism of the counter-productive nature of ANC violence shows some signs of a realisation of the importance of compromise in politics.

// Another point worth contemplating with regard to utopian thinking is the fact that the project of an ideal society is elusive. This does not mean that man should not strive towards such an ideal. However, equally important is the realisation that the practice of politics remains a human affair and that there is a need for eternal vigilance in the present situation, in the transition period and in the final dispensation since every political set-up eventually shares in the fundamental ambiguity of all human achievement.

4.3 A third tension can be found in the opposition between the master key that Turner uses to unlock the processes in society and the rich texture of society itself. Turner has a mono-causal view of how society works and therefore he plays down the importance of, for example, racial and cultural differences as sources of conflict. Insight into the role of class, race, culture, ideology, religion, etc. as spheres of conflict would not invalidate the role of class but limit its explanatory power. The human subject is involved in a plurality of structures and processes which co-determine his historical position. A person is not only a member of a class, but also belongs to a certain race; participates in a certain culture by means of a particular language which structures his life-world; follows a particular ideology which determines which values take priority in his life; and commits himself to a particular religion which conditions the way in which ultimate questions are framed. The reductionist move towards mono-causality is a typical metaphysical move which is, of course, the basic characteristic of the discourse of historiography, but this is no reason for philosophy to fall into this trap and to remain silent when complexity is reduced to simplicity, or the world to only one description or history to only one story.

4.4 There is also a tension between the freedom of the human subject and the historical context, political set-up, discursive formations, social structures and processes and material conditions which limit that freedom. This tension indicates a problem which is not only symptomatic of Turner's way of thinking but is typical of the endeavour to understand the position of the human subject in his surroundings. The way in which Turner formulates this tension, this dialectic between man and his world, is of course coloured by his own assumptions. Crucial in this respect is the use he makes of the existentialist idiom. Following Sartre, he ascribes to man a uniqueness which is a-structural, a-historical and a-social. In his doctoral thesis on Sartre he states: "Man has no 'nature', because the structure of consciousness, a continual project in the future, is such that it can never be bound to anything, and can always doubt any value. It is this structure of consciousness to which we are referring when we say man is free. He transcends the given towards a goal, a value which he constitutes himself implicitly or explicitly. This transcending is what characterises being human" (Morphe, 1980: XV).

Let us now look at the a-structural, a-historical and a-social implications of this view. This notion of freedom, namely, that "the structure of consciousness can never be bound to anything" is typical of a way of thinking which assumes that consciousness has access to itself without the mediation of language, viewed in a literal and metaphorical sense. It is language which structures consciousness and it is to language as a system of signs to which consciousness is inevitably bound. And language, whether in a literal or metaphorical sense, is not an individualist but a communal phenomenon. And this applies to the language we speak or which speaks us, and to the languages we live or which live us, namely, the languages of history, culture, society, religion, ideology, economics, etc. and the hierarchies and power relationships expressed by them. This insight into the role of language in understanding would have toned down Turner's methodological individualism which conditions him to view human choice in an abstract

way as unlimited, instead of seeing it as an act mediated by language and therefore determined by what is available to us in historical situations. In order to come to an understanding of the structure of freedom we need an insight into the languages of history, culture, society, religion, ideology, economics, etc., for these languages or sign-systems all structure freedom. Viewing freedom in this way in terms of sign-systems, enables one to say that not only was Turner's own consciousness and freedom structured historically in a particular manner but also his concept of freedom was conditioned by the languages operative at that stage of history.

But Turner not only held an a-structural view of freedom but also an a-historical view of human consciousness. Consciousness is defined as "a continual project into the future" which is not bound by the past. His endeavour "to grasp the present as history" is therefore handicapped right from the start by his view of man as a project into the future which does not acknowledge his roots in the past. He directs man to a socialist future but he lacks the socialist concern with history as a guide to that future. He talks about the present as history but does not realise that the present is the dialectical relationship between past and future, and that without an understanding of the past the project into the future remains merely utopian.

Nash (1982:15-26) identifies three assumptions made by Turner in his account of South African history to support "his view that the future is unconditionally open to human choice". All three assumptions illustrate the kind of difficulties one comes up against if one denies the continuity between past and future because of a lack in one's understanding of the past. Indeed, the unfinished business of history will revenge itself, not only in the sphere of practical politics but also in the sphere of one's understanding of what is happening and what should happen in society. First, Turner

assumes "that technology and technical knowledge are socially neutral, and can be understood apart from the social relations in which they emerge" (Nash, 1962:15). The second assumption is that "relative social equality can be obtained, not by altering the relations of productions in society, but by gaining relative equality in the sphere of material consumption" (17). Thirdly, Turner assumes that "black South Africans have not only a relatively full understanding of the society in which they live, but also of the society they would choose to live in" (19).

The third assumption is of crucial importance, for it illustrates the extent to which the existentialist bias influences Turner to project into the future without fully appreciating the traces of the past in the discrepancies of the present. His utopian thinking tricks him into by-passing the unfinished business of history. Blacks are assumed to have an awareness of the "material values underlying racism". Although only a small proportion of blacks have a socialist consciousness Turner ascribes to the majority of blacks such an awareness. According to Nash (19) Turner separates political consciousness from political organisation: "For him, the political consciousness of the oppressed and exploited exists independently of their organisation to transform the goals of that consciousness into historical reality" (19). By operating with a concept of consciousness which is a continual project into the future with no roots in the past he "excludes any historical process which might form that consciousness" (20).

I have already pointed out how the existentialist bias in favour of the uniqueness of individual experience implies an a-structural and an a-historical view of consciousness. The last point about individual uniqueness separated from a historical process has led us to the a-social nature of Turner's view of consciousness. This view also clearly illustrates the tension between individual morality and collective politics.

According to pluralism the individual discovers himself by being involved in a plurality of associations. He becomes a person through shared values and shared experience. With regard to political change the individual cannot rely on the so-called uniqueness of his experience but must involve himself in associations organised with the purpose of bringing about change. In the economic field it could be a trade union, and in politics a liberation movement.

There is one example of this insight in Turner's book which is worth quoting. It is an insight which transcends the individualist idiom used in The eye of the needle for it admits the social dimension of individual consciousness not only in its socialisation into a conservative frame of mind but also in its socialisation into a liberationist stance. This insight reflects the important contribution of pluralism, namely, that both positions are the result of processes of socialisation. Turner (1980:85) states: "There is an intimate relationship between change in consciousness and organisation. Consciousness develops along with organisation. To be effective, organisation must be related to the way in which people see the world and must help them to see the world in a new way. There are three essential elements in this new way of seeing the world. I must come to see the world as able to be changed. I must come to see myself as having the capacity to play a part in changing it. And I must see that my capacity to do this can be realised only in co-operation with other people. To grasp these three facts involves a fundamental shift in psychological attitude towards the world, rather than a simple change of intellectual awareness. Such a shift only occurs once I find myself involved in action." This psychological shift is clearly not a unique experience of an isolated individual but a shared experience in an association which relates to problems of everyday life. He continues: "Only if organisation begins from the immediate problems that I experience in my everyday life can I begin to learn in practice that the world can be changed, that I can

change it, and that to do so I must work with my neighbour. The process of political change through the development of organisational solidarity must itself be a participatory experience if people are to become conscious of the possibilities of freedom." In discovering the social dimension of consciousness the human subject also discovers how consciousness can develop meaningfully into projecting a new future. Projecting into the future is not a natural but rather a socio-historical characteristic of being human. This insight enables one to overcome the limitation of viewing consciousness in an a-structural, a-historical and a-social manner. Turner, therefore, succeeds at least in pointing to a more contextual way of thinking. Nevertheless I have found it necessary to criticise the limitations of his thinking in the broad historical context in which he operates. The influence of the particular political context on Turner's thinking is discussed by Nash (1982) in his perceptive essay on Turner which takes into account Turner's later development.

## V

### Conclusion

Philosophy is not only a many-faceted discipline but also a language game that can be played in many ways, and it would be improper to prescribe for philosophers how they should philosophise and which themes they should explore. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasise the importance of Turner's way of doing philosophy. I would also like to state my appreciation of the fact that Turner's philosophy was motivated by a concern for justice, that the theme of justice was formulated in the context of the practice of the injustice in the South African society, and that his commitment was of such a kind that he did not refuse to stand up for what is just. His death was not merely a cessation of breath. His death passes judgment on the kind of society in which we live. It also says something about his way of life and his style of philosophising. His way of doing philosophy succeeded, not only in relating philosophy to history, but also in relating history to

philosophy. And this he could do because he struggled with the difficult problem of how to become a philosophical and historical contemporary of his time. He was conscious of the important role played by presuppositions in philosophy and of the historical context from which he operated, drawing our attention to the problem of the way in which history itself conditions philosophy. The fact that he could not bring this insight to maturity does not detract from the importance of his contribution. The stage is indeed set for thoroughgoing research in this area.

In spite of its limitations, his exploration of the relationship between consciousness and history contributed to our understanding of the dialectic between philosophy and history. He struggled with the difficult problem of "how our history forms our consciousness without making consciousness a mere expression of its history, but leaving it an active role in choosing its future" (Nash, 1982:3). In answering this problem Turner illustrated one of the important tasks of philosophy, namely to help us understand the historical task of emancipation from all kinds of domination. Although Turner lacks the depth and scope of Habermas' view of the emancipatory role of philosophy this does not detract from the importance of his contribution to this insight in the South African context.

In his discussion of the unpublished later work of Turner, Nash (1982:3) assesses this contribution as follows: "Turner brought his considerable intellectual gifts and exemplary political commitment to the problem of recognizing past reality without denying future choice which continues to confront our struggle for freedom in South Africa today. Indeed, this problem confronts us with even greater urgency and clarity than it did when Turner began to address it in the last five years of his life. Like all genuine philosophical problems, it arises from the concrete historical conditions in which men and women live and struggle, and can only be resolved by their struggles. It can only be resolved by creating the conditions in which all

men and women are freed from the realities of oppression and exploitation and enabled to choose their own future and the future of all humanity. The historical task of resolving this problem cannot be undertaken by philosophy alone; the task of philosophy is to help us understand how that historical task is to be undertaken." In terms of this line of thinking, I can say that we honour Turner since, by using philosophy to help us understand the historical task of emancipation from all kinds of domination, he helps us to become philosophical and historical contemporaries of the present day. If we want to become men and women for all seasons, we can only do so by becoming fully human beings of this time and of this place, of this tragedy which is called by the name of South Africa.



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