

Continuing debate

The captive mind and creative development

Syed Hussein Alatas

Volume XXIV, No. 1, 1972, of this Journal was devoted to 'Development Studies' and contained an article by the present author (who has since become our correspondent in Singapore) on 'The Captive Mind in Development Studies'. Here, S. H. Alatas enlarges on this question. He is the Head of the Department of Malay Studies at the University of Singapore.

What is a captive mind? Confining ourselves to the Asian context for convenience, a captive mind possesses the following characteristics:

A captive mind is the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad, whose way of thinking is dominated by Western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner.

A captive mind is uncreative and incapable of raising original problems.

It is incapable of devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes.

It is incapable of separating the particular from the universal in science and thereby properly adapting the universally valid corpus of scientific knowledge to the particular local situations.

It is fragmented in outlook.

It is alienated from the major issues of society.

It is alienated from its own national tradition, if it exists, in the field of its intellectual pursuit.

It is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is.

It is not amenable to an adequate quantitative analysis but it can be studied by empirical observation.

It is a result of the Western dominance over the rest of the world.

Each of these characteristics can be the subject of an exhaustive study; they are not exhaustive and

further research may increase their numbers. For our purpose it is sufficient to identify the subject of discourse. Due to the passion for generalization, the suggestion has been offered in the course of discussion of my earlier papers on the theme, that the phenomenon of the captive mind is also found in the West. I replied that this was not so. No doubt we can find uncreative, imitative, fragmented and alienated minds everywhere but they are not identical with what is discussed here and which we hope to introduce into the conceptual apparatus of the kind of social science that should tackle the problems of Asian societies and the rest of the developing world.

Where in Western civilization do we come across even a single mind trained entirely in the sciences from the Orient, reading books from the Orient by Oriental authors, going to a university run along an Oriental tradition, taught predominantly by Oriental teachers, directly or indirectly by means of their books, dependent on libraries overwhelmingly stocked with Oriental books, using an Oriental language for higher study? The counterpart of the captive mind does not exist in the West.

Should they exist, the problems selected for attention at home would be determined by influences from the Orient. The hypothetical captive mind in the West would be more familiar with Oriental history than his own. Yet even those Europeans who adopt Oriental cults or philosophy do so in an original manner. They select that portion of the Oriental belief system which suits their purpose. They do not transfer whole institutions to their societies. There is hardly a European Hindu, Buddhist or Moslem whose thinking on European day-to-day issues is predominantly Asianized. When it comes to matters of science, politics, planning, education, economics and so forth, his thinking is completely

European as far as the fundamental categories of thought are concerned. That is to say, he remains an autonomous intellectual personality.

Once again, let me stress the fact that a captive mind is not merely an uncritical and imitative mind. It is an uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective. To clarify this we shall have to offer concrete illustrations. The imitativeness of the captive mind and its uncritical approach operate at definite levels of thought. First let us distinguish between two types of imitation, the constructive and the negative. Let us assume that an Asian student studies the method and organization of taxation in the West. When he returns, he discovers that the situations differ. He realizes that it is very difficult to collect taxes from far-flung villages with inadequate administrative facilities. Thus he becomes critical of the method of tax collection he was taught. But his critical awareness does not extend to the fundamentals of taxation. He does not ask whether tax deductions should be allowed only for the wife and children. Should it not be allowed also for parents if they are supported by the taxpayer? The Asian system of values enjoins maintaining your parents. Asia has no social security system that enables parents who are no longer working to obtain financial support. If our Asian student, returning from abroad, sets about to devise a taxation system in harmony with his own cultural tradition and the dictates of the local situation, involving a reappraisal of the current taxation system in its fundamentals, then we shall consider him an independent, not a captive mind.

The captive mind is found in all fields of knowledge, but I shall confine myself here to the social sciences and the humanities. Take history. A scholar of history assimilates the modern techniques of historiography developed in the West. These techniques possess general, universal validity. If a European historian gets his facts wrong on Asian history, our captive Asian historian is able to correct him. But what he cannot do is to reappraise the fundamental presuppositions of historical interpretations. One instance I have in mind concerns South-East Asian history. It is the general view that, no matter what negative effects Western colonialism had on South-East Asia, it introduced modern science and technology to the area.

A historian with a captive mind does not challenge this presupposition. He takes it as axiomatic. However, my own research into the history and sociology of colonialism in South-East Asia revealed that colonialism was a retarding factor in the assimilation of modern science and technology from the West. Details of this are discussed in a forthcoming publication.¹

The assimilation through imitation of technology and scientific procedures and knowledge valid for the development of Asian society can be highly constructive. Imitation saves time and energy. No society can develop by inventing everything on its own. When something is found effective and useful, it is desirable that it should be adopted and assimilated, whether it be an artifact or an attitude of mind. Constructive imitation is a feature of social life. It is characterized by the following: (a) it is based on a conscious and rational choice; (b) it supports existing and sound values; (c) it considers the problems, if any, surrounding the adoption of the innovation; (d) its non-adoption would be inhibiting to society; (e) it increases the understanding of phenomena surrounding the innovation; (f) it does not disrupt other aspects of social life considered more valuable; (g) it does not create great strains detrimental to the purpose of the undertaking; (h) it enters the collective value system in the sense that it is recognized as valuable by large groups of people; and (i) it is not the effect of manipulation by external groups motivated by their own interests to the detriment of the adopter.

The concept of the captive mind as one dominated by negative imitation, that is imitation which exhibits the opposite characteristics, is neither political nor ideological but phenomenological. An Asian may adopt communism but as a communist he can be a captive mind or an independent mind. If he is independent he will adapt communist philosophy to the Asian setting, extricating what is culturally Western from the general philosophical components of communism. The same may be said of those who uphold the liberal-capitalist philosophy. Similarly an Asian who is vehemently opposed to colonialism may yet be a captive mind. What defines the captive mind is the state of intellectual bondage and dependence on an external group through the operation of media such as books, institutions, the radio, the press, television, conferences and meetings.

The empirical manifestations of the captive mind are too numerous to set down. They are not subject to quantitative analysis. If three copies of a given book are sold, we cannot know exactly how each reader reacts. We can hardly ask him whether he is an uncritical, imitative reader, and we are prevented from conducting a survey on captive minds. Who wishes to be regarded as a captive mind? The best we can do is to observe its empirical manifestations.

At the undergraduate, and even at more advanced levels, the phenomenon of the captive mind is real and pervasive. The great problem for the developing societies is that graduates do not function properly in their own societies. They are not able to translate into their context of values the social sciences and humanities they have studied. Students of political science, for instance, are taught that the freedom of the press is an essential feature of democracy. This is so in Western democracy, but is not the case in Malaysia. Yet it is difficult not to classify Malaysia as a democracy because it conducts elections. Yet the press in Malaysia is controlled through a system of annual renewal of licences to operate. A graduate who functions adequately should describe the system accurately, if he is called upon to do so by the nature of his work. Suppose he becomes a university lecturer, what will he say in class? The situation should force him to conceptualize the system, if he is aware of it. The fact is that many of our trained people do not arrive at such levels of awareness.

Let me offer another illustration of the effect of the captive mind, this time in planning. In unemployment analysis, the Malaysian Government has, for the last sixteen years, used only one type of unemployment figures for major planning purposes, that is aggregate unemployment of residents, both male and female. Yet the employment figures of each sex should be presented separately, the reason being that male unemployment presents a more serious problem than female unemployment, especially between the ages of 16 and 24. This is due to the nature of the social system. When a woman is not employed, she depends on her family and assists it in household work. When a man is not employed, there is less absorptive capacity for him in household work. Hence we see significantly more unemployed men loitering around than women.

The fact that household work can absorb

fewer men than women poses a problem. Male unemployment tends to be more parasitic on the family. Furthermore the women are most likely to get married before reaching the age of 24 and continue as housewives, whether employed or not. Men are not likely to get married if unemployed. That the man is the breadwinner is still a cherished value in Malaysian society. Hence male unemployment is more serious than female unemployment. Furthermore, upon marriage, it is the woman who stays at home to manage the household and care for the children. Hence the exit of women from the labour force into the home is an important factor in the employment situation: it decreases the number of those urgently needing a job. At a given time it is therefore important to us to know whether more males or females are unemployed. If there are more males then the urgency for employment is greater. If there are more females then the urgency of employment is not as great, while that of marriage is. A government that does not plan on the basis of this differentiation unnecessarily invites an additional difficulty. It blurs its own vision as to the differential gravity of the unemployment situation.

We may note that the concept of employment can be further modified. There is no reason why we should not include unpaid labour such as that of housewives and students as employment. Implicitly the Malaysian Government excludes those in educational institutions from the unemployed category. Similarly convicts are not considered as belonging to the unemployed. Yet they do not earn wages in the conventional sense. Nothing is more revealing of the influence of the captive mind than the inconsistency surrounding the use of the employment concept. In one instance non-wage earners are classified as unemployed (housewives), in another instance they are not so classified (students and convicts). A more genuine concept of unemployment should be based on the notion of unproductive and enforced dependence on others for livelihood. As opposed to this is the notion of productive and intended dependence, like that of a housewife. Wage earning need not be the criterion of employment but only of one major and significant type of employment. Hence if we extend the concept of employment along the lines suggested above, we shall obtain an entirely different picture. Farm help and shop assistants among family members, housewives, and even

students and convicts would then be not considered as unemployed.²

As indicated earlier, a captive mind dealing with a problem may yet be critical at a certain level. In the case of unemployment he is taught by his foreign mentors to be critical of the figures and the problems around the organization of the census. He does not go further than what he is taught. In other words his thinking is not inventive. He does not pose new problems and offer new solutions. It is this attitude, more than anything else, which explains why the overwhelming majority of the developing countries have not succeeded in narrowing the scientific and technological gap between them and the advanced industrial countries after more than half a century. I do not suggest this to be the only cause but in the matrix of causation it is an important segment. We can go on enumerating instances of the empirical manifestations of the captive mind. So pervasive is its influence that it is difficult to convince people even of its existence. It is one of those phenomena which are likely to become obvious only to those who spend years in the region observing what is going on. I am afraid, that at this juncture, I cannot do more than to describe and conceptualize it, unsupported by a comprehensive empirical study in the form of a book, the absence of which is indeed further proof of its prevalence.

The problem of the captive mind has several dimensions which will not be discussed here. Amongst these are its origins in the interaction between the West and the Third World accompanying Western imperialism, the unawareness of the governing élites of the Third World regarding the problem, and the failure of the higher institutions of learning in the Third World to generate its opposite, the creative mind. The higher institutions of learning in fact promote the increasing influence of the captive mind. This is further aggravated by circumstances surrounding the universities in the Third World. We shall here restrict our discussion to Asia.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries marked the beginning of general modernization in Asia, a crucial problem of which is the discrepancy between ideal and reality. In university education this discrepancy has taken an alarming turn. In numerous universities and higher institutions of learning of some Asian countries the discrepancy between ideal and reality is such that it takes the

form of corruption and decadence. The discrepancy here is not merely in the realm of intellectual and professional attainment but also in the realm of ethics and morality. To such universities students are admitted on the basis of bribery. Different faculties have different prices. Examination results can be influenced through corruption. Presents are given to staff members. Students with powerful parental background exert a dominating influence on staff members. This state of affairs affects an entire generation of students in at least one South-East Asian country I know of. In the face of such problems one is stimulated to renew interest in the mission of the university. It has been generally recognized that the mission of the university is to provide trained manpower for the country's need, to extend the intellectual depth and horizon of successive generations, and to ensure maximum, all-round personality development. However, in the developing societies the mission of the university must also include the moral and intellectual reform of the society which sustains the university.

In the West the modernization of the university took place as part and parcel of over-all modernization. Many creative personalities and inventors were not university teachers. The initial modernization process of Western society was not very dependent on the university. The case is different in the developing societies. Dependence on the university is far greater. Hence the university should not be considered in isolation from the other essential conditions of modernization and progress to be found in the society of which it forms a part. To date interest in university development has primarily been focused on growth problems and structural educational planning. The content of university courses has received less attention. By content is meant what actually transpires in classes, not just the name of the course printed in the syllabus. The content of courses can be a serious problem if insufficient attention is given to it. It can breed a dysfunctional generation of graduates, especially in the social sciences and humanities. If courses are not closely related to the problems and mentality of surrounding society, the role of the university degenerates to that of a status factory.

As the universities develop more and more into centres of professional training or status factories, the likelihood of detecting the captive mind

diminishes. The universities are too busy with other problems. Furthermore the universities themselves are captive in outlook. There is not a single university in Asia that realizes the need to introduce a special course on captive thinking in the sciences, to make students aware of the need to adapt the sciences which they imbibe from Western sources. What happens is a mere transplantation of thought.³ Again I do not mean here a simple adaptation of techniques and methodologies but of the conceptual apparatus, systems of analysis, and selection of problems.⁴

J. P. Singh Uberoi, of Delhi University, expressed his concern over the problem as follows:⁵

The aim and method of science are no doubt uniform throughout the world but the problem of science in relation to society is not. The problem or problems of science in a rich, technologically satiated society are different from, even opposed to, its problems in a society of poverty lately liberated from colonial bondage. The two sets of problems and two situations cannot, without serious falsification, be placed upon a single continuum. It is scientism and not science which conceives of them along the single line of unilinear evolutionism. Our understanding of the proper content of science, its problems and its priorities in relation to a specific society will depend on our attitude toward this question.

Theoretically this is readily enough accepted but there is little practical follow-up. A great number of Asian scholars are imitative in their approach and problem selection. To write about Asia does not mean writing with an Asian approach. What is the Asian approach in the social sciences? It is tackling Asian society in a social scientific manner around specifically Asian problems and developing concepts and methods suitable to the occasion. We shall again have recourse to empirical illustrations.

Two years ago I read out a page from a research paper on education and national development in class. I was talking about Singapore. Not one of my students suspected that I was reading an article by an Indian on India. I simply substituted for the word 'India' the word 'Singapore' and the whole material was suddenly equally valid for Singapore. The habit of using general concepts such as 'modern', 'achievement', 'goals', 'planning' and so forth has given birth to a body of

scholars' literature (I refrain from using 'scholarly') comparable to Diner's Club cards. They can be used everywhere. It is the preoccupation of the captive mind to indulge in the use of such imported concepts without a proper and meaningful linkage to the objective situation.

Another great problem of the captive mind is that it is not able to differentiate the universal from the particular: it subsumes both under the universal. When a captive mind studies the sciences from the West, phenomena which are distinctly Western are often considered to be universal. This is a trend which, for lack of better terms, I would suggest we call 'methodological imperialism'. It assumes that what is good in one place is good in another also and what is valid in one is valid in another. Further it is expected that other parts of the world develop in the same manner as the modern Western world. For instance, in the case of urbanization, it is suggested that all the non-Western world will pass through the same stages and phases of urbanization as those experienced in the Western world. If the people of a certain city have time for entertainment and hospitality, if they don't rush from bus to bus, this means they are not yet very 'urbanized'. When they attain New York's stage of urbanization, then they will exhibit the characteristics of New Yorkers. It is a matter of time and stages.

This reasoning is not only confined to urbanization, but it is broadly applied to other areas, such as economic development, or religious life. There is a tendency in modern urbanized Western society for people increasingly to lose their sense of the sacred. Since the religious sentiment of the sacred is alleged to be gradually losing ground, therefore, it is argued, sooner or later, the non-Western world will also forget its religions. When they have developed in the industrial sense as the West did, they will also, thanks to the introduction of modern science and technology, disintegrate religiously. The development of the non-Western world is considered as parallel to that of the West. The captive mind does not consider another possible alternative, that is, methodological non-alignment. One can, after all, choose one's own problems independently, develop methodology according to local needs, without being dictated to by external forces.

Owing to its indoctrination, the possessor of a captive mind is not able to assess critically

whether the suggestion of parallel development is true. At home he will do research oriented towards the decline and destruction of traditional cultural elements because this orientation is popular abroad in the lands of the captors. That there is both survival and destruction of culture elements in each period is a generally valid proposition but its precise features depend on the context of each situation. Furthermore, a balanced outlook will pay attention also to the surviving elements. Each phenomenon must refer to its opposite. Thus, research on the generation gap in Asia must refer to inter-generation links. Is Asian society dominated by the gap or the links? What is the nature of each in Asia, assuming that the gap has been defined and established in the Asian context?

Another instance of the operation of the captive mind is the notion of value-free social science. Many captive Asian political scientists believe that they should avoid using value-loaded terminologies in their discourse on the ground that this enhances the objectivity of their approach. This attitude is not the consequence of years of effort in studying the problem of value-judgement but the result of mere conditioning. They fail to sense the distinction between legitimate value-judgement and disguised partiality.

An example of a legitimate value-judgement is Sarton's view on science and his motivation for writing the history of science. According to Sarton, apart from religious, political and economic imperialism, there is a subtler kind of imperialism derived from the notion that our ways are the best ways, our manners the finest manners, our taste the good taste.⁶

Such a state of mind is hopeless. In the field of rationality and science, however, free from sentiment and from cant, some degree of objectivity is attainable, and there can be a consensus of opinion. It is for that very reason that science is the basis of unity and peace. There may come a time when such a consensus will be so evident and compelling that there will be no room left, at least among good people, for injustice. Scientific truth can be checked, and when it has been checked and found to conform with reality, it is easy enough for every person of any nation to accept it without loss of face, and the acceptance can be continued as long as the truth itself is not refuted by new facts. No basis is more certain and more secure upon which to establish the agreement of mankind and its unity. There have been, of course, discordant and hateful voices in every period, not only in our

own, but it is the rational and peaceful ones which have carried humanity forward. Though this book occasionally mentions evil men and describes evil deeds, it is very largely dedicated to the good men of the fourteenth century—saints and thinkers, men of science and men of peace—the very men who, being interested in truth above aught else, transcended their own parochial or national limitations and worked, consciously or not, for the whole of mankind.

Here Sarton expresses his preference for the good, for the truth as a desirable objective. That is the kind of value to which science is inextricably tied. We promote the science of healing but not the science of torture despite the fact that the latter does exist.⁷ Intrinsically science is associated with the good and the significant, although it can also be associated with the bad or the trivial. Amongst contemporary captive minds it is often associated with the trivial. The subject of study chosen by captive minds is often trivial owing to its fragmented nature. In political science captive minds avoided major problems in Asia, such as: What should be good government for Asia? Has Asian leadership succeeded or failed to initiate national progress, with the concepts of success, failure and progress appropriately defined? What is the effect of corruption on Asian society? What classes dominate in the countries of Asia? Why has the majority of the Asian countries remained backward after a quarter of a century of independence? What is the degree of criminality amongst Asian rulers?

The last question would horrify those whose terminological choice is timid: they would be horrified by its value-loadedness. How can one speak of a 'criminal government' in an Asian country? The conventional terminology of political scientists admits of such expressions as 'conservative', 'inefficient', 'backward', and so forth but not 'criminal'. They were taught by their foreign mentors that it is not proper to use terms like 'criminal' to describe a government. The root of all this is the unconsciousness of sophisticated value-judgement and its related philosophical foundation. There are two possible criteria of value-judgement, the external and the internal. The external refers to a set of objective criteria as the basis of judgement. When we say a government is 'stable' we refer to a set of criteria independent of the nature of the government in question. Yet a government may consider itself to be

unstable and if we accept this without reference to objective criteria we are judging on the basis of the internal criteria. Social scientists whose minds are captive unconsciously use both criteria uncritically and inconsistently.

To return to the political scientists, they would call the president of a country its president even though he acquired the office through an unconstitutional seizure of power, using the internal criteria of judgement even if most countries do not recognize the régime. I have no quarrel with them here. But suppose the régime is corrupt and the law of the country considers corruption a crime. Are they now prepared to call it a 'criminal' régime? In their works they never talk about 'criminal' governments although criminal governments have been known to exist. The books on political science written by their mentors abroad at most talked about 'good' and 'bad' governments, not of 'criminal' governments. Hence in their vocabulary 'criminal government' is not present.

Captive minds are not able to create a new conceptual vocabulary. Thus we have a set of vocabulary describing types of governments such as democracy, autocracy, theocracy, and so forth. We should introduce yet another term, ignocracy, the government by the ignorant. There are several ignocratic governments in the world. There is no reason why political scientists should not attempt to conceptualize it in demonstrably operational terms.

So far I have exclusively concentrated on the description of the captive mind and related phenomena. As indicated earlier several dimensions of the problem are not treated here. A major dimension is the captive mind as an instrument of the reigning ideology. If we debunk the captive mind eventually we will have to reach its foundation, the ideology to which the scientific tradition of the captive mind is inextricably tied. For the moment our problem is, what can we do to prevent the proliferation of captive minds? How can foreign institutions contribute to solve this problem? Should students be sent abroad or study at home? There can be no general answer as it depends on the subject of study and the condition of the country. As to the problem of captivity, it makes hardly any difference. The choice is one of being converted by the master abroad or by the disciple at home. Both operate as the recruiting

agents of captivity. An Indian economist trained in Delhi is no less captive than one trained in London, if his Indian teachers and the surrounding intellectual infrastructure are captive to the Western metropolitan world of learning.

As I see it the problem is not to avoid the Western world of learning but to assimilate it in a selective and constructive manner. The sciences have been developed in contemporary Western civilization. The generally valid, universal aspects of these sciences have to be separated from their particular association with Western society. To take an example from psychoanalysis, the Oedipus complex is a generally valid scientific concept but its incidence and manifestation differ in different societies.⁸ Thus when an Asian student studies Freudian psychoanalysis in Amsterdam he should adopt the following attitude: to learn psychoanalysis as a system; to understand its application to Western society; to distinguish critically the components of psychoanalysis, those which are universally valid and those which are derived from the cultural background of the West; to consider what aspects of psychoanalysis can be applied at home in Asia; to increase the conceptual and methodological repertoire of psychoanalysis based on the Asian setting as to make it at home and effective in Asia.

Students should be consciously introduced into this way of thinking through courses specially designed for the purpose of promoting selective assimilation. These courses should deal with the problems of uncritical imitation as an aspect of the international movement of thought. They should be taught by people from different disciplines who are well versed in the problems of imitative thinking, who are familiar with the sociology of knowledge, and do not themselves have captive minds. They should be given in a language suitable for a class composed of students from different disciplines. As to the level, off hand I would say the second and third years. Each class should be composed of students from the same broad grouping of the sciences, such as medicine, the social sciences, the biological sciences, the physical sciences or the botanical sciences. The teachers are also to be selected from these groupings.

Which country should be responsible to furnish these courses? Should, for instance, Australia furnish these courses for Asian students in Australia, or should the Asian country from

which the students come provide them? It is clear that the responsibility lies with the Asian countries themselves. If Australian institutions take up the matter, it would be a generous gesture but it is certainly not their duty to concern themselves with the special problem of preventing Asian students from becoming uncritical, imitative, passive consumers of knowledge. What can the Asian governments do for their students abroad? For those at home they can introduce university courses around the problem of the captive mind. For those abroad, their foreign missions can all combine to finance and sponsor a summer course of short duration with the assistance of the host government.

The teachers must be carefully selected from a pool of emancipated scholars from Asia and the host country: books should be prepared on the subject. Journals should be published devoted to the phenomenon of the captive mind. As far as possible the works of non-captive scholars should be disseminated in the campuses. To start with, a conference on the captive mind could be initiated. But all this would be of no avail if those who are responsible for planning and organizing are themselves captive or captors. This brings us to the counterpart of the captive mind, the captor mind. Who and what is the captor mind?

The captor mind is the Western scholar or his Asian disciple who imparts knowledge through books or lectures in a manner which does not promote consciousness of the fundamentals of scientific thinking and reasoning. The main characteristics of the captor mind are that its presentation of the sciences is not contextual, is not philosophical, is not relational, and is not intercultural. The captor mind does not necessarily become such by intention, just as the captive mind does not necessarily seek captivity consciously. They are the instruments of a gigantic and imposing intellectual superstructure.

When a captor mind teaches psychology, for instance, he does not use materials from non-Western cultures though these are extremely relevant to his theme. He is usually not interested in the philosophical foundation of psychology which would make his students appreciate the cultural biases of psychology. He is not interested in the problems of the non-Western world even from the point of view of limited comparative reference. In the case of the Asian disciple, if he functions as

the captor mind, he is at the same time a captive mind. A clear instance is an Asian teacher of political thought who teaches his Asian students the political thought of Ancient Greece and Rome, but not of China, India and the Islamic world, though this is extremely relevant to contemporary Asian society.

The concept of the captive mind refers only to a segment of the entire mental make-up of the individual. It coexists with different other elements. What are apparent manifestations of the captive mind may be a consciously designed conformity or docility adopted for motives of self-interest. This may be most striking under oppressive, totalitarian régimes where it revolves around issues of unquestionable importance to the régime, such as its political ideology or its position of power. Scholars and intellectuals may inhibit their originality if it comes into conflict with the régime, though they are not necessarily captive minds, but this does not reflect the situation of the great majority of the captive minds.⁹ This great majority is captive without being in the situation where it is compelled by circumstances to suppress creativity and to exhibit instead conformity and docility. Even for the purpose of gratifying the 'powers-that-be', an emancipated mind can more effectively serve its own egoistic interests than a captive one.

Aside from issues touching upon the political and ideological sensitivities of the rulers in non-democratic régimes there is a vast range of issues where the emancipated mind can fully express its contributions. In various totalitarian situations, there has been no lack of creative expression amongst scholars and scientists as long as they avoided conflict with the ruling power or ideology. In many post-war Asian countries despite the absence of totalitarian régimes, the prevalence of captive minds has nevertheless been great. Even non-democratic Asian régimes do not prevent a social scientist from becoming creative in his field. In day-to-day affairs he may adopt the outward trappings of conformity but this does not make it necessary for him to conform to the economic thought of his mentors in Oxford, Moscow or Berkeley, concerning issues which have no bearing on the ruling power in his country.¹⁰

As to my suggestion concerning the educational measures we can take to check the growth of the captive intellectual community, it should be

weighed against various other factors. The two most important ones are the attitude of the ruling élites and the maintenance of a group of emancipated thinkers, sufficiently influential to direct attention and effort towards the reform of the cap-

tive minds. These two complementary conditions for a successful campaign against mental captivity are conspicuously lacking in the Third World, which is at the present stage of its intellectual and scientific history in the era of the captive mind.

Notes

- ¹ Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, London, Frank Cass (forthcoming).
- ² The Malaysian definition of employment is the following: 'A person was considered to be employed if he had been gainfully at work on any day during the week previous to the survey, whether as a salaried employee, employer, own-account worker, or unpaid family worker.' The term 'gainfully at work' is understood as all activities covered in the estimates of gross national product. 'Hence, house-work would not be included as gainful employment so that house-wives, unless they had a secondary occupation or were actively looking for work, were regarded as outside the labour force, with labour force defined, in the conventional manner, as the total employed plus unemployed. Students too were regarded as outside the labour force unless they had a secondary occupation or were actively seeking employment. Sick persons and those on vacation were reported as employed if still on the payroll of the employer; so were those away from work during the reference period because of industrial action.'—*Report on Employment and Unemployment in Metropolitan Towns States of Malaya 1965*, p. 1, Department of Statistics, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), 1965. How would this definition consider the convicts? They are not employed, not destitute, not seeking employment, and yet not unemployed for they are not part of the labour force. The Malaysian Government, and for that matter perhaps all Asian governments, does not know the number of wives in the country because the information is not deemed significant.
- ³ Significant aspects of this problem are discussed in Ralph Pieris, 'The Implantation of Sociology in Asia', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1969.
- ⁴ For further discussion around this theme, see Syed Hussein Alatas, 'Some Problems of Asian Studies', *Modernization and Social Change*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1972.
- ⁵ J. P. Singh Uberoi, 'Science and Swaraj', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, p. 119, New Series, Vol. II, 1968.
- ⁶ George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, Vol. 3, p. vi-vii, Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, 1947.
- ⁷ It is true that torture has been scientifically studied but it has not been promoted as a science with its attendant institutions and social approval. There is no university course on torture, no professor of torture, no journal of torture, no doctor of torture, no book advocating the practice of torture. The torture practised in some places was done often in secret. It did not have the status and prestige of a science. There is no academy of torture just as there is no academy of prostitution although prostitution may also be a craft deserving scientific attention. They are not given scientific status and development owing to our system of values. Hence what constitutes science at a given period is determined by our system of values.
- ⁸ The Oedipus complex as a psychological phenomenon exists and in some instances operates amongst a noticeable segment of the population. In Asian societies its incidence is rare, and its form also may differ. The mechanism of child rearing in Asia does not produce an Oedipal situation. The case of Iran reflects the rest of Asia. 'The fact that the child is being taught by the mother that the father should be respected and feared not only prevents rivalry between son and father, but on the contrary precipitates the process of identification. As a corollary, no preconditions exist in Iranian culture favouring Oedipal situations; when the male child is in his early teens, he is already fully identified with the father.' Harutian Davidian, 'The Application of Some Basic Psychological Theories in the Iranian Cultural Context', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, 1973, p. 539.
- ⁹ While admitting the operation of numerous conditions unfavourable to the development of creativity in science, the fact remains that the nature of the individual himself is partly

Notes (continued)

to blame. The captive mind is greatly responsible for the prevalence of mediocrity in science. Mediocrity appears to be the general characteristic in the Third World. The situation in the Middle East, discussed by Zahlan, is a reflection of the Third World. He said: 'The mediocre academic who is willing (and happy) to attribute the blame for his poor performance to the system is a common phenomenon. Few indeed are those who are capable of extracting some advantage from the system and of achieving significant scientific results', A. B. Zahlan, 'Science in the Arab Middle East', *Minerva*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1970, p. 15.

¹⁰ It is this inner captivity, arising from foreign conditioning among those who study abroad, which led to the alienation of interest from the problems of the graduate's or scholar's own country. 'A doctor specialises in a rich

man's diseases. At home the poor man's intestinal, eye and bone diseases go unresearched. A chemist is educated to fit as a component in a team. A graduate student in an advanced country is educated to believe that certain activities are important and worthwhile, while others are not. Working in a large corporation on the servomechanism of a missile, or developing the electronics for anti-jamming devices to render guided missiles an effective weapon are worthy enough. Teaching in a small college or at a new university in a developing country is not perceived as an equally desirable occupation.'—A. B. Zahlan, 'Problems of Educational Manpower and Institutional Development', in Claire Nader and A. B. Zahlan (eds.), *Science and Technology in Developing Countries*, p. 306-7, London, Cambridge University Press, 1968.