A personal document is not disciplined by the conventions of academic writing—documents, graphs, footnotes, which are in the service of objectivity. No amount of strategic devices used by social scientists to obscure the subjectivity of the author can hide the "I" who writes.

The accounts in the letters I am editing take a number of different forms. There is the anthropology of everyday life, as when I use Indian traffic patterns—the propensity to straddle the center line, the reluctance to come to a full stop, the pervasive game of chicken—to cast light on political negotiation, to cast light on what Lloyd I. Rudolph called the continually negotiated order. The traffic becomes my grain of sand. Some letters employ the microsubjectivity of the letter writer to give meaning to macropolitics, as when I describe the impact on everyday life, including our life, of Indira Gandhi's emergency government in 1975. The letters permit me to experiment with generalizations whose truth will have to be explored in a wider arena than my letter-life—as when I try out a theory of the old and the new Indian federalism and ideas of sharing sovereignty more generally.

The form of my letters was shaped by the audience and by the definition of the epistolary situation. The audience was not readers of the *APSR*, not graduate students in an afternoon seminar. Rather, they were readers of the *New York Times*, intelligent nonacademics, friends and siblings and parents and colleagues, with a good admixture of Ph.D.s and public intellectuals. The definition of the situation was not a demand for "contributions to knowledge," as in an academic publisher's inquiry, available especially to seekers of knowledge, but the expressive transferral of experience to soulmates. It's an audience with standards, but permissive, leaving room for me to try out new ideas, to be playful without having to pay the penalties that a professional readership can extract. It was an audience that had no special knowledge of India, forcing me to privilege description and to specify the obvious rather than assume shared experience.

The letters provided a vehicle to evolve the sort of method and style characteristic of area scholarship. Area scholars are Burkians, not Lockians. They are practitioners of specificity and contextualized knowledge, starting with the presumption that "my" people are particular. They reject liberal universalism, reject the doctrine that all humanity is the same.[1]

What many area scholars had in common with Burke was their respect for the dignity, worth, and meaning of the other. That respect could not be enacted except via recognition of the distinctiveness of the other. Conveying the feel and texture of a place and of its human relationships required the specificity that is achieved by entering into the life of the other, under some circumstances "becoming" the other—as when we speak their language. The narrative form of the "letter" favors particularity over generality, and made me resist treating local thought and practice as instances of some abstract universal. The ideal letter, which I did not achieve, would aim to portray (*pace* Isaiah Berlin) "the differences, the contrasts, the collisions of persons and things and situations, each apprehended in its absolute uniqueness and conveyed with a degree of directness and a precision of concrete imagery"[2] not found in other modes of communication.

To conclude, the narrative form that I am now editing has implications that are congenial to my and your [the IMM Conference Group] methodological preferences.

NOTES:

1. Udai Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in 19th Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
2. Isaiah Berlin, quoted in Nicholas Kristof, "On Isaiah Berlin," *New York Review of Books,* February 25, 2010, 27.

THE MANY SEATS AT THE ROUND TABLE OF KNOWLEDGE: LLOYD I. RUDOLPH REMARKS ON RECEIVING THE GRAIN OF SAND AWARD

The many years Susanne Rudolph and I spent editing and interpreting Amar Singh's diary for our book, *Reversing the Gaze*, led us to reflect on the multiplicity of forms of knowledge, starting with Amar Singh's first-person, subjective knowledge and extending to the situational truths of Gandhi's *satyagrahas.*

I start with a story familiar to anthropologists. A Cree hunter is asked by a Canadian court to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about his people's way life. "I'm not sure I can tell the truth," he says, "I can only tell what I know."[1]

Amar Singh, like the Cree hunter, tells what *he* knows about what he has experienced. Like the Cree hunter, his knowledge is situated and contextual; his voice is located in time, place, and circumstance. The epistemology of subjective knowledge stands in marked contrast with the epistemology of objective knowledge—i.e., knowledge based on a view from nowhere, generated by unmarked and unencumbered observers.

James Clifford glossed the Cree hunter's concept of truth as "rigorous partiality." Clifford reverses the conventional valuation of partial and impartial, treating partiality as the more desirable and impartiality as the less desirable state. Rigorous partiality recognizes and validates the situated, inflected nature of truth. Rather than denying or repressing the existential character of the sociology of knowledge, rigorous partiality self-consciously acknowledges that place, time, and circumstance shape why and how knowledge is acquired and what it is taken to mean.

Clifford's second signification for partiality refers to that which is not whole, complete, or capable of being carried to completion. "Rigorous partiality" makes the epistemological claim that knowing the whole truth is a capacity not given to mortals. The best they can do is to strive for partial truths.

Early on in our work with the Amar Singh diary, we recognized that subjective knowledge posed a challenge to the monopolistic claims of science to objective knowledge. But we are not arguing in reply to such monopoly claims for objective knowledge that subjective knowledge is the only form of knowledge, or even that it should be taken to be the best or a better form of knowledge. We think there is room at the round table of knowledge for the imaginative truths found in literature, myth, and memory; for the archival truths of history; for the spiritual truths found in religions and religious experience; and for the aesthetic truths of the visual and performing arts.

We have been re-enforced in our tendency toward pluralism in forms of knowledge and ways of knowing by Max Weber's embrace of it on the last page of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism:*

It is not our aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of cul-

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ture and history. Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth.

Gandhi's Method of Situational Truth

Another source for our view of interpretive methods is the thought of Mohandas K. Gandhi, sometimes referred to as Mahatma Gandhi. We have argued that Gandhi's thoughts about truth challenged the hegemony of modernist objective truth prevalent in his time. Gandhi's view of truth resembles those of some postmodernists and of American pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey.

Let us begin with the views of Gandhi's chosen heir, the high modernist Jawaharlal Nehru. In an exchange of letters with Gandhi in 1945, Nehru told Gandhi that his 1909 critique of "modern civilization" in *Hind Swaraj* was "completely unreal," a Nehru euphemism for obscurantist. For Nehru, Gandhi's ideas were, at best, those of a traditionalist rooted in an archaic past. They were, of course, anything but. Gandhi's critique of "modern civilization" in *Hind Swaraj* foreshadows postmodern critiques, and his thinking about knowledge and truth resembles that of American pragmatists.

Gandhi's thinking about knowledge and truth resembles pragmatists' in its refusal to embrace modernism's preference for foundational truths, truths that claim to be universal, knowledge that claims to be objective, and master narratives that make claims to universal explanations of historical change. The seventeenth-century inventors of modernity held that laws of nature, axiomatic ideas, and ubiquitous self-interest were independent of time, space, and circumstance; they were, as it were, the same everywhere and always.

As the knowledge claims of foundational truths, particularly those of the Newtonian model of natural science, spread to other domains of knowledge, its adherents began to claim that "scientific method" was the only valid way of knowing. "Science" alone, it was said, can ask and answer questions. If it wasn't "scientific," it couldn't be true.

As a self-declared *karma yogi*, Gandhi's epistemology was rooted in "truth in action," a concept that locates truth in experience, in the facts and circumstances of particular situations. Before launching a *satyagraha* campaign, he thoroughly familiarized himself with its particular context. In a process evocative of the pragmatists' concern for context and of the discovery phase of a legal proceeding, he carefully investigated the relevant circumstances, including the attitudes and motives of the contending parties. The goal of the campaign was formulated with reference to the situation's unique problematic. As a *satyagrahi*, he practiced firmness in the pursuit of contextual or situational truth.

Gandhi respected experimental science and its methods as a way to access truth. In his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, he used the word "experiment" quite deliberately in the title of the book. In language suggestive of Karl Popper's about falsification, Gandhi wrote: "I claim nothing (more for the experiments) than does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them." He continues in language paralleling that of pragmatists' such as William James and John Dewey: "I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions" but "I do claim that my conclusions are . . . correct, and seem for the time being to be final. For if they were not, I should base no action on them."

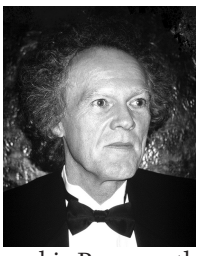
Gandhi's reasoning about truth starts with his commitment to the view that "truth is God." Gandhi makes clear in a variety of ways that seeking God, like seeking absolute truth, is not the same as knowing God or knowing absolute truth. The absolute truth or God could be approached, but not known, by mortals. Unlike those moderns who think that they can know absolute truth in the form of objective truths and universal laws, Gandhi thought that making such claims was to envy God and seek to be like Him.

As an adherent of the Jain doctrine of *ane-kanata-vada*, he viewed truth as many-sided and its understanding by the human mind as "fleeting and fragmentary." Gandhi sometimes compared absolute truth to a diamond that could not be seen whole, but whose many facets or surfaces revealed partial truths.

For Gandhi, truth had several meanings and forms. It could be situational, as in the goal of a *satyagraha*; contextual and contingent, as in the experimental truths found in his autobiography; and absolute, as in his commitment to "Truth is God." "For me," he continued, "truth is the sovereign principle . . . not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth . . . that is God. . . . I worship God as truth only. I have not yet found Him . . . *but as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.*" ■

NOTE:

1. James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 8.



Kim Quaile Hill was elected to the position of president-elect of the Southern Political Science Association at its annual meeting in Atlanta in January 2010. Professor Hill will assume the presidency of the association at its 2011 annual meeting. The SPSA is a professional organization of political scientists that publishes the *Journal of Politics*, hosts an annual conference, and presents awards for outstanding academic contributions. Hill is the Cullen-McFadden Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M University. He previously served as the editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* from 2002 to 2005 and as director of Texas A&M's graduate program in public administration in the Department of Political Science. Over the years, he has served in consultant and advisory capacities for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the U.S. Presidential Management Internship Program, the Texas Legislature, the Texas Department of Human Services, the Menil Foundation, and the City of Galveston, Texas. He has authored, co-authored, and edited several political science textbooks and original research, including *The Criminal's Image of the City* (1979), *Democracies in Crisis: Public Policy Responses to the Great Depression* (1988), and *Democracy in the Fifty States* (1994). ■

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