

## EXTRA-TERRITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

HUMAN beings are subjected to a limited determinism or predestination simply by being born at a certain time. Those who began their lives in America about 1870, and who would live, say until the 1940s, were likely to participate in the famous American "optimism" which Robert Heilbroner says is no longer justified, and to believe wholeheartedly in Progress, Science, Education, and the American Century. Those born in 1970 and now moving into the first grade in school—who are absorbing no-one-knows-what from their parents and surroundings—will almost certainly acquire a very different point of view. What could be more unpredictable than the typical state of mind of Americans, say, twenty years from now?

One thing is certain: More diversity of opinion is being fed into the generation now starting out than at any other time in recollectable history. Some reasons for this are quite evident. All the orthodoxies, for one thing, are breaking down. Religious orthodoxy has been weakening for more than a century, and may now be nearing its final end. The current revival of Fundamentalism probably ought to be seen, in social terms, as a forerunner of the intellectual *rigor mortis* which precedes breakup and change. Science, with considerably more dignity, is openly questioning itself. The political faiths of today are all subject to severe strains, while the hardening of certain political attitudes has the same significance as fundamentalism in religion. Institutional disintegrations bring fright, brooding anxiety, but also release. Previously unpermitted ideas are first allowed, then they become daringly fashionable, and finally, after a time of selection and consolidation, they are shaped into the stable assumptions of the next epoch of history. Today we are in the midst of a flood tide of once unacceptable ideas, making it either the best of

times or the worst of times, depending upon subtleties of moral preference and, sometimes, which generation you belong to.

In "normal" times the task of growing up means mostly finding out what sensible people are thinking and learning to think in the same way. Not *everybody* copies his peers, of course. There are always eccentrics, dissenters, and anachronistic wonderers. Whether or not we are fortunate that these people are few in number is a question that deserves looking into. Could there be a society without an orthodoxy? If not, then is orthodoxy precious and deserving of defense? But if orthodoxy is also a blind brake on desirable change, and needs attack from time to time, then what will help to give order to the lives of people who *want* authoritative guidance in what to think, what to do, and who feel lost without it?

There are no firm answers to these questions, of course, except that wisdom and balance are required. Yet the questions are important to ask for the reason that thinking about them generates a certain reflective patience with differences of opinion, even in times of crisis.

We said that there is a limited determinism simply in getting born at a certain time. The determinism is limited because of the questioners, the wonderers, the autonomous thinkers, the autodidacts. The best example of the autonomous thinker in Western thought is probably Socrates. One man couldn't change the course of Greek history, but what he could do was show how one man is able to create a visible island of intellectual and moral independence in a declining age. One might say that civilization will have been achieved when such islands grow into continents. We can hardly imagine what this would be like; indeed, Socrates had trouble imagining it. The only place he could believe it might be developing was in

Heaven, yet he went right on behaving *as if* he lived in such a place. He was a curious combination of patience and impatience, as the *Crito* reveals.

So, the question becomes: What is the right *as if* behavior when things are coming apart, when orthodoxies are breaking down, when the center will not hold? How will this behavior differ from the activity that seems appropriate in a time of boisterous and happy progress, an age of optimism and high expectation?

Instead of trying to answer this question directly, we might contend that greater understanding is possible in bad times, because then one is able to remember the old grounds of the promises or expectations, and also to see that they are not coming true, which raises the need to understand why. Hardly anyone ever asks why *good* times come to us.

This may have been what Hegel meant when he said that the owl of Minerva does not rise until the sun of Empire sets.

Today, for example, when our sun is going down, there is a new-born respect for ancient thinkers. This is a fresh quality in scholarship—good scholarship. Men who lived thousands of years ago are being studied as though they might actually have known things we don't know. The ancients are also being superficially mined by dilettantes (fluent designers of new orthodoxies), but this is inevitable in a culture that lives too much by words, and sometimes by accident it opens doors for at least a few people who will not remain content with hearsay wisdom.

Referring in general to this trend, D. S. Carne-Ross speaks of the mood which "relates the very old to the very new" in "Classics and the Intellectual Community" in *Arion* (Boston University) for Spring, 1973:

Classicists have been slow to take advantage of a feature of twentieth-century culture that could do much to offset the loss of the once easy access to their territory. I have in mind the modern feeling for the

archaic, "the resurrection of long-forgotten styles" (in Malraux' phrase) and the recovery of ancient images and modes of thought, the great labor and retrieval that has brought a lost world into the light and set old and new interchangeably side by side. . . .

Our great resurrection men have touched modern culture in various ways and they have left their mark on the classroom, if not often on the classical classroom. There are students who seem more at home with *Gilgamesh Epic* than with *Middlemarch* and can somehow, without a syllable of Greek to their name, stand open to the *Iliad* and make it part of their experience, an *Iliad* very unlike the poem lodged sedately in the literary tradition. . . .

From the classicist's point of view this is a remarkable piece of luck; his occupancy of the earlier world of Greece provides him with a piece of valuable property. But instead of simply accepting this as a windfall he should ask himself *why* we have acquired our strange sympathy with the archaic and what it "means": what grants this new openness and allows these alien forms to pierce the crust of our time?

My own guess is that this new openness represents a half unconscious search for new, or old, sources of refreshment and life. In this task it sometimes seems as though the past itself were collaborating with us, turning or returning in response to a call that cannot be properly articulated since nothing in our present way of thinking encourages us to think of the past as an active force. To do so we would have to learn *a new sense of the past*. . . .

In his case for the mastery of the language of the ancient Greeks—a persuasive one—Mr. Carne-Ross takes a sentence put into English from Thucydides' *History*, describing the Athenians just before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War:

"In a word, they are by nature incapable of either living a quiet life themselves or of allowing anyone else to do so."

This translation, the writer says, while accurate enough, loses much of the depth of meaning in the Greek terms for a "quiet life" and for the nervous sort of Athenian "activism." A rumination over the words in the original shows what translation can hardly convey. The phrase, *echein hesuchian*, "living a quiet life," has a spectrum of meanings, one of them the artist's or

thinker's freedom from everyday pressures that, with Plato, becomes "the leisure that makes possible the philosopher's *vita contemplativa*." It is also "a tranquillity of mind, a withdrawal from the rough and tumble, a quietism, almost, which expressed itself in the cultured leisure of rich and longestablished societies."

In contrast with this is the typical "much-doingness" which William Arrowsmith has described as "that quality of spectacular restless energy that made the Athenians both the glory and the bane of the Hellenic world." The word for this is *polupragmosune*:

He [Arrowsmith] goes on: "In political terms, *polupragmosune* is the very spirit of Athenian imperialism, its remorseless need to expand, the *hybris* of power and energy in a spirited people; in moral terms, it is a divine discontent and an impatience with necessity, a disease whose symptoms are disorder, corruption, and the hunger for change." We ourselves possess most of the ingredients that go to compose this word. It is *polupragmosune* that sends our bombers to Vietnam and our crewcut astronauts crawling on the moon, and sends half a dozen trucks and bulldozers to havoc the perfectly adequate country road in Maine beside which I live. We have the ingredients but interestingly enough we have no single word that comprehends them, no word through which to comprehend, and contemplate, the full span of our *polupragmosune*.

Mr. Carne-Ross does not argue simplistically that if we all knew ancient Greek, we should find it easier to understand ourselves. While there are parallels between Greek culture and our own, there are also differences: The contrast of qualities in the Athenian temperament "is a *Greek* debate and its terms and values are not our terms and values." Why, then, should we learn Greek in order to understand Thucydides well? Because the debate, he says,

comes from a point outside our own cultural field and brings there something that we do not have—an *extra-territorial perspective* from which to look, with a certain detachment, at the things our society does and the way we are forced to behave inside the reality it proposes. Greece offers a different reality, not so different as to be incomprehensible but different

enough to be challenging and to show our familiar assumptions and the everyday conduct of our lives in a strange unsettling light. But: there is only one way to enter this Greek reality and that is by going to the Greek texts in the original. Translation cannot serve, it shares our own cultural reality and is written from our own cultural perspective.

Hence I doubt it is valid to say, with Steele Commager that if Lyndon Johnson had read Thucydides on the Sicilian expedition, things might have gone differently in Vietnam. I suspect that the former President would have read only what he thought he already knew. We need to revise Mr. Commager's remark and say: if we had a certain number of people—an intellectual community—capable of regarding our affairs from the extra-territorial perspective that Greece can provide, *then* things might go differently in Vietnam and in our society at large.

One must be grateful to Mr. Carne-Ross for this careful qualification, since without it we should have to decide to study Greek or remain without salvation. But the principle he declares and defends is the establishment of an *extra-territorial perspective*, and there are various ways of doing this. Knowing the classical languages is one of them. Think of the handful of individuals who have done it in other ways: Ortega, Michael Polanyi, Abraham Maslow, and doubtless others we don't recall at the moment. They constructed a platform on which to stand, providing the necessary leverage for deliberate change—precisely what knowledge of ourselves and our circumstances is. The classical languages are one magnificent tool for accomplishing this, and good to use as an illustration since language is such an obvious example of ways of thinking.

But to have real impact, work by more than a single individual is required. A community of extra-territorial thinking is needed to create a plateau on which a number of minds resonate with fresh possibilities. Then, as Carne-Ross says, "things might go differently."

One of our difficulties, he also says, is that "nothing in our present way of thinking encourages us to think of the past as an active

force." This is a criticism which has various applications. Only since the nineteen-thirties have we been getting books which look at past religions and philosophies as faiths that human beings like ourselves actually *lived* by. A forerunner work (1929) of this sort was Harold R. Willoughby's *Pagan Regeneration* (University of Chicago Press), and there have been scores, since, those by Joseph Campbell, Huston Smith, Frances Yates, Kathleen Raines, and Edwin Burt being perhaps the best known. An effort is made by these writers to think in the way that ancient peoples and philosophers thought. For example, Benjamin Lee Whorf tried to think as the Hopi Indians thought—and think—interpreting for his readers the results as reflected in their language. Today we are experiencing a veritable wave of this kind of internal subjective-objective research, recovering attitudes which were basic to the cultures of the past. The reanimation, however, is not always successful or constructive, since, as in the present, the past had various levels of understanding ranging from vulgar belief to delicacies and profundities for which, like some of the conceptions of the Athenians, there are no corresponding terms in our thought and language. There were True Believers and Fundamentalists in antiquity just as there are today. Speaking of the levels of religion in ancient Egypt, H. Frankfort says in *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Columbia University Press, 1948):

. . . it is understandable that the ordinary man, absorbed by the struggle for existence in his lifetime, did not think much beyond the measures of precaution which usage indicated as desirable in his death. It is this limited, worried point of view which appears as a mechanical projection of ordinary life into the beyond. . . . It is no wonder that those who approach Egyptian religion from such adaptations and take their stand on texts written for the least thoughtful section of the population, reach the conclusion that the Egyptian beliefs concerning afterlife do not make sense. But they act like a man who would gauge our present knowledge of the stars by studying horoscopes in the newspapers. The view which we have described in this chapter stands at the opposite end of the scale; in fact, the belief that

immortality is found in sharing the perennial movements of nature may seem to us too vague and too unrelated to the actual problems of human life to qualify as basic faith.

Using Prof. Frankfort's plot of extra-territoriality, we are able to note that there is today a large segment of the American population which seems to "gauge our present knowledge of the stars by studying horoscopes in the newspapers!" This extraordinary interest in astrology last year precipitated a militant protest by "186 leading scientists, including 18 Nobel prize-winners," according to the *Humanist*, the magazine in which some astronomers' objections to the claims of astrologers appeared (in the September/October 1975 issue). What accounts for this fascination of so many people by astrological prediction and typing of personality?

Without attempting to decide who is "right"—the astrologers or their astronomer critics—we know certain things about human beings and human nature, enabling us to understand (in principle) the zest for easy classification (He's a *Scorpio!*), and the comfort in settling doubts by predicting the future. Viewed in these terms, astrology seems a species of psychic technology. It has a "scientific" aspect in that science, too, classifies and predicts, and depends very largely for vindication as science on the verification of its predictions. There is indeed an area of human experience in which science is able to say with confidence, "If you do this, such and such will happen." This fits perfectly with Francis Bacon's dictum, "Knowledge is power." It is worth noting, however, that the present-day criticism of science does not challenge its "know-how," and willingly admits that science provides a great deal of power to human beings. The issue is not that at all; quite probably, science could move in any direction it chooses and acquire similar manipulative powers. The real issue is that science is seldom a means to anything more than technique; that its disciplines do not lead to moral vision or wisdom; and that power, conceived as

good in itself, tends to make the human use of power increasingly destructive.

Meanwhile, the "scientific" criticism of astrology (as given in the *Humanist*, with various endorsements) is mainly that astrology is no sort of science but merely a revival of ancient magic. This seems an unfortunate basis for condemnation, coming at a time when it is beginning to be admitted that "magic" (and what rather illustrious individuals of the past meant by the term) is hardly understood in modern times, that it is not grounds for ridicule but a subject for patient and respectful research. People once thought hypnotism was magic—and maybe it was (and is) magic of a disreputable sort. The issue may prove simply a matter of terms and definitions.

Astronomers and others also say that astrology is bad for people because of the way they use it. This may be so—very widely so—but the comment has practically nothing to do with science. It is simple common sense. This sort of judgment is often used against science itself, and also turned into a defense of science by professionals who say, "Well, we filled the order, but we didn't tell them to do *that* with it!" It was a *politician* who decided to drop the bomb! The *scientists* asked him not to.

The main emphasis of the eminent astronomer, Bart J. Bok, in criticizing astrology (apart from denying that it is scientific) is illustrated by a quotation from the late Gordon Allport, who said that people turn to astrology "in times of disruption and crisis when the individual's normal safeguards against gullibility are broken down." Sounds true enough.

Interestingly, Pico della Mirandola, probably the most learned man of the Italian Renaissance, said much the same thing in his *Polemic against Astrology*, despite the fact that as a Kabalist he spoke of a "true astrology." Whatever he understood by this term, his position was that the popular astrology of his day failed to distinguish between the natural and the spiritual. Pico, as

Ernst Cassirer says in his defense of this youthful genius of the Revival of Learning, believed that—

In the spiritual sense man stands "above" the stars and above the whole of corporeal nature, so truly as he *understands* this nature and is able to know its order and laws. This is his greatness and elevation. As a natural being he is a vanishing nothing; as a thinking being he understands the heavens, and in this understanding transcends them. . . . What from the standpoint of intellectual history is most notable about this argument is the circumstance that while it reaches a result of decisive significance for the progress of natural science, this achievement developed on an entirely different soil from that of exact scientific thinking. (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, June, 1942.)

Pico's extra-territorial attack on astrology had little to do with whether or not it "works." He was concerned to point out that what "works" is in the realm of necessity, while man's true life lies in the realm of freedom. If preoccupation with what works blinds us to the opportunities and obligations of freedom, then we become less instead of more human as a result. "The conclusive objection Pico raises against astrology is that it fails to see this distinction. Instead of understanding each of the two realms, the world of bodies and the world of spirits in its own specific sense, and instead of applying to each its appropriate method of knowing, astrology wilfully obliterates all distinctions." This, interestingly, was precisely the criticism directed by Tolstoy against the practice of science in his time! While the rhetoric of science claimed to leave untouched the area appropriate for the exercise of human freedom, its practical assumptions obliterated freedom's logical ground.

In short, to exchange mechanistic determinism for starry predestination is not "progress," nor is it liberation from "materialism." The profitable side of astrology, in rather precise analogy to the profitable side of technology, tends to be some salable form of escape from responsibility.

There is nonetheless irony in the fact that the engineer critic of astrology in the *Humanist*,

Lawrence E. Jerome, chose to focus his attack, not so much on the issue of whether or not it "works," but in the charge that "astrology is false because it is a system of magic, based on the magical 'principle of correspondences'." This is ironic in that the charge is made at a time when the old hermetic and kabalistic conception of man as the microcosm of the macrocosm is receiving renewed attention.

Whether or not a theory or a discipline "works" is an empirical question which becomes difficult to settle in direct proportion to the subjectivity of the area of its operations. In physics, cause-effect demonstrations are regarded as "objective" proof. In education, however, the cause-effect demonstrations, when relied upon for a time, almost always turn out to be based on dehumanizing assumptions. If, then, "true" astrology has a value, this value will almost certainly be discovered to be in the region of life where predictions have secondary importance.

## *REVIEW*

### PRODUCTIVE TROUBLE

THE question raised by Christopher Stone and made famous by Justice Douglas in his 1972 Mineral King dissent—"Should Trees Have Standing?"—can also be applied to small towns, which are about as defenseless against attack and misuse as the pileated woodpecker, the coyote, dolphins, whales, and the water ouzel. Orville Schell begins *The Town that Fought To Save Itself* (Pantheon paperback, \$6.95):

A town which is a community is a delicate organism. As yet, it has virtually no legal means at its disposal by which to protect itself from those who choose to search it out. Unlike an individual, it cannot sue for invasion of privacy. It cannot effectively determine how many people can live in it. It cannot even decide for itself the number of visitors with which it feels comfortable. The roads are there; anyone may travel on them. A commercial establishment is free to advertise the town's name and its desirable attributes in the hope of attracting people to it in order to make money. If the people who call that town home find the influx of people, cars, and money unsettling, they have little recourse.

A town is public property not only for its residents, but for the world. In many ways, it is at the mercy of forces existing outside its boundaries, and of people whose names it does not know and whose faces its inhabitants will never see.

What unites a town, gives it a (more or less) coherent identity, and compels the selection of common objectives? Trouble. Trouble gets people together, makes them aware of each other's hopes and fears, and, sometimes, generates a field of awareness where some sort of vision can come into play. This is what happened in Briones, a coastal California town of about 2,000 population and 650 dwellings, where the typical income in 1974 was between seven and nine thousand dollars a year. (Briones is not the real name of the town, and if you read his book you see why Mr. Schell doesn't tell it, although anyone with a little effort could uncover his thinly disguised secret—the place is too close to San Francisco and too beautiful to remain unknown.) What sort of trouble hit Briones? First there was a nasty oil spill, and all the people struggled to clean up the hideously polluted beaches. Then the state, with some local collaboration, decided to install an

enormous and (as it proved) unnecessary sewage system:

Among other things, it promised to run a force main full of sewage right across the San Andreas fault. It called for a million-dollar outfall pipe which would have fed partially treated chlorinated sewage out onto one of the most renowned tidal pool marine habitats. It proposed to hook up almost every house in the area (even those on septic tanks) to solve the problem of 187 houses which allowed sewage to flow into the Lagoon through an ancient collection system. Hookup was to be at owner's expense.

It would not be an overstatement to say that the town soon became electrified over the subject of sewage.

Mr. Schell's book is a blow-by-blow account of what a town can (sometimes) do to save itself from such a fate, and to start working toward consciously chosen common objectives. Reading it is a course in functioning American democracy. The book shows that it is not impossible to interrupt and (sometimes) alter the course laid out according to the blind habit of governmental bureaucracy. It also shows that the ideas of people like E. F. Schumacher, Jane Jacobs, and dozens of others in the environmental and ecological fields have filtered into the common consciousness of intelligent and educated people, and can flow into action at the local political level. Briones developed an articulate community spirit. The people worked together; people with a lot of disagreements worked together. When some of them got tired and withdrew, others volunteered. True, there was a lot of talent in Briones—no doubt an exceptional town—a place where artists and craftsmen as well as old-timers who don't like cities have settled. But living there together brought out what they all had in common more than it emphasized differences. True, what happened in Briones couldn't happen just anywhere. A certain maturity exists among people who are able to see what is going on around them, stand off and look at it in order to evaluate the various currents of social causation, decide what can and ought to be changed, and what it is better to let alone, and to do all this without getting mad and disgusted.

What actually happened? The town is an unincorporated area without much local government. There is a Public Utilities District (PUD) which has

a board of directors, so the "reformers" (including the author) got themselves elected to the board, and another group of oil-spill veterans formed the Briones Future Studies Office and did a little protective planning. Everybody who thought about it decided that growth would absolutely ruin the town, and there were enough of them to make decisions. They realized that they could build a no-growth factor into their sewage disposal system by meeting only present needs. All sorts of issues were precipitated by this idea: Who were they, after all, to deny newcomers the privilege of moving into Briones to share in its delightful climate, ocean view, green things growing, and fun-loving, grownup-hippie cultural environment? They hadn't lived there forever. Who is entitled to draw the line? But the fact remained that much more population would turn Briones into a dreadful place, spoiling it for everybody. So, using common sense, they planned their immediate future according to the rule followed by the Mir of Hunzaland—to provide an economy of *just enough*. Just enough sewage disposal, just enough public water, just enough homes.

*The Town that Fought To Save Itself* invokes a lovely sort of nostalgia without being in the least sentimental. The reformers are shrewdly slap-happy, commonly considerate not just of each other but of practically everybody, even the "enemy" in the character of a real estate developer who owned some land and wanted to make a "decent profit" putting up some nice condominiums. The women in this drama are magnificent, often the leaders. One of them made a citizen's arrest of an arrogant, swaggering sheriff who delighted in pointless arrests. One day he erred by speeding through a zone marked fifteen miles an hour. She kept insisting that he go to trial until the authorities promised that he would always have a desk job—never again drive a county car—for the rest of his official life. She didn't want to punish him, just keep him away from their friendly streets and beaches.

Slowing down development would create local problems, but somehow these were (partially) solved:

Our town would not be an easy one for which to plan. Beyond the obvious need to preserve the land

around us, there was also the subtler need to arrive at ways by which the people there could sustain themselves without commuting or resorting to connections to the big money pot over-the-hill [in San Francisco, etc.].

Ironically enough, the largest single employed body of people in town were in the building trades. Almost all the work was small-scale building. A carpenter-contractor would hire a few men to build someone a house. Or a plumber, electrician, or carpenter would help someone build his own house. As Peter, down at the real estate office, described it, "There is a good organic relationship between builders and people in this town. It would be a pity to destroy it." Jobs have traditionally been contracted out by word of mouth. . . . The only other steady jobs were provided by the School, the BCPUD, the Bird Observatory, the restaurants, the Bar, the post office, and the hardware store. Most of these paid very low (around \$2.50 an hour), but people were willing to take them because they were congenial and because they did not require an almost impossible commute.

A great variety of other people made varying amounts of supplemental income farming, fishing, baking, baby-sitting, house painting, cutting firewood, hauling junk, gardening.

Then there were a rather surprising number of writers, poets, artists, sculptors, weavers, architects, photographers, film makers, cabinet-makers, and musicians who managed to make some part of their incomes by working at home, or elsewhere, whenever opportunity knocked.

That is about all we have space for. Mr. Schell has written a chamber music sort of book—it is about a town, but a small town, and you can always hear the individual players; the sense of the town develops from listening to the identifiable contributions of these players.

One thing more: a fertile valley (part of Briones) becomes the scene of a daring land-trust venture involving cooperative land-use and endless encounters with the building code authorities—discouraging and frustrating, but with occasional and wonderful explosions of common sense and a small victory or two, followed, months later, by another little victory. The end is not yet . . .

Photographs by Ilka Hartmann, who becomes a mother in the last act, complete the charm of this book.

## *COMMENTARY* **PHILOSOPHIC PIETY**

ANOTHER side of Morris Cohen's loyalty to principle, given dramatic characterization in this week's "Children," is shown by a further passage by Prof. Hook:

Without abating any of his criticisms of existing American shortcomings, he saw them in proper proportion. . . . For him, as for Santayana, piety was "reverence for the source of one's being." It was an emotion naturally acquired without ideological indoctrination or blinding. Those who went beyond rational criticism and reform and denounced America, either from the standpoint of an impossibly perfectionist ideal or, more often, as defenders of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, appeared to him to be violating the adage "not to spit in the waters from which one has drunk." . . . Toward the end of his life, he wrote:

"None of us are self-made men and those who think they are, are generally no credit to their makers. The language in which our thinking moves, the ideals to which we are attuned in the formative years of our childhood, our habits, occupations, and pastimes, even our gestures, facial expressions and intonations, are so largely the social products of generations of teaching, that no man can understand himself and his limitations unless he understands his heritage, and it is very difficult to understand one's heritage, or anything else unless he approaches it with a certain amount of sympathy."

Morris Cohen's criticism—which, as Hook says, was rapier-like and brilliant—became constructively effective by this sympathy, diffused through his work.

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The fundamental flaw in popular mass faiths seems summed up in a brief phrase quoted from *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (see page 7). Comparing the different levels of thinking about immortality among the Egyptians, Prof. Frankfurt speaks of the "limited, worried point of view which appears as a mechanical projection into the life beyond." Actually, the language of purely personal longing—for what Maslow referred to as deficiency needs—seldom calls into play the

higher qualities of Being, the side of man's life that seems a natural part of Eternity. The Buddha's apparent denial of individual survival after death, so insisted upon by the Theravada Buddhists, might well have been a means of discouraging a vulgar, compromised conception of immortality. The indifference of the Stoics to promises of future "rewards" was doubtless grounded in the same austere conviction—that only the noble, the heroic, and the good can survive the winnowing process of death.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves THE GOOD OLD DAYS

IT seems well to remind ourselves from time to time of the traditional services performed by universities. These services may have weakened during the past fifty years, or the people who work in universities may have grown ineffectual, but in principle the institution of higher learning is a place which enables good teachers to say what they think without having to go hungry as a result. The kind of expression which becomes possible—or even characteristic—under these circumstances might be illustrated by the closing passage of a chapter in Carl Becker's *Everyman his own Historian* (1935), a dialogue between a Communist and a Liberal (Becker):

*Liberal:* I should dislike very much to be confronted with a clear-cut choice between a dictatorship of the proletariat and a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. I should be inclined to say, "A plague on both your houses!" I find Mussolini as offensive as Stalin, and Hitler more offensive than either.

*Communist:* That is all very well, but a real revolution is not impossible. There are plenty of Russians who could assure you that the alternative you so much dislike has been presented to them in a quite sufficiently clear-cut and dramatic manner. If it should be similarly presented in this country, it seems to me that you would, however much you might dislike it, have to choose one side or the other.

*Liberal:* Not necessarily. There would still be another possibility.

*Communist:* What would that be?

*Liberal:* I might still refuse to join either side. I might persist in the futility of expressing my faith in the superior virtues of persuasion.

*Communist:* That would have serious consequences for you. You would be suppressed.

*Liberal:* True enough. But I might accept the consequences. I might choose to be suppressed rather than to support what I object to. In short, I might, as a last refuge from imbecility, become a Christian and practice the precept that it is better to suffer evil than to do it.

*Communist:* That would be to fall back upon a far more mystical type of idealism than Marx ever contemplated, and I fail to see that it would get you anywhere.

*Liberal:* I daresay it wouldn't. But, as I said before, I am a professor, and a professor, as the German proverb has it is "a man who thinks otherwise": if he is not permitted to talk freely he cannot get anywhere anyway.

Universities, it is true, have a spotty record on this issue, yet now and then they have given courageous men some security, preventing the society from making martyrs of them. It is something to supply a region where thoughtful men need not become either martyrs or heroes simply in order to practice what are for them everyday decencies and integrities of the mind. Such regions are indeed the presence, if only the symbolic presence, of civilization. The test of a real university: Are the teachers *ready* to go hungry, if they have to, to keep themselves free?

It seems worth noting that real freedom can be preserved only by productive *use*. Freedom is really a subjective affair. If it is not actively exercised, its space contracts, sometimes to nothing at all.

In the *American Scholar* for this summer, Sidney Hook writes about one of the distinguished teachers of the first half of this century—Morris Raphael Cohen, author of *Reason and Nature* and (with Ernest Nagel) *Logic and the Scientific Method*. (Cohen's freedom was enormously productive, and tested, too.) Anyone who has read and used these books will want to read Prof. Hook's appreciation of Morris Cohen, looking back fifty years to when he went to school to him as a philosophy student at the City College of New York. Sidney Hook is an accomplished thinker and writer, able to fill out for those who know Morris Cohen only through his books a splendid portrait of a rare man. In one place he says:

At a famous dinner for Cohen on the occasion of his twenty-fifth anniversary as a teacher at CCNY, all the notables in philosophy turned out to defend him

against a rumored threat from the new president of his institution. When Cohen himself made an eloquent speech on his method of teaching undergraduates, he spoke of the service that philosophy can render in education by functioning as a "logical disinfectant."

It was a greater philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, who remarked in another connection, "One cannot live on a diet of disinfectants"—especially in philosophy. Cohen was well aware that philosophy was vision, and that, at best, the purpose of logical techniques was to work out the details of the vision and to test its deliverances. The legacy of the great philosophers consists not in what they deny or reject but in what they see and affirm. Cohen, too, had visions and insights that, despite himself, shone through the dazzling intellectual swordplay of the classroom. He had great wisdom about the affairs of the world, despite his emphasis upon the virtue of professional detachment, and he had a moral courage that, in the perspective of academic behavior in our time, glows more strongly with the years. Wisdom was apparent in his writing and moral courage in his stance on various controversial issues.

His moral courage was evinced shortly after the First World War when he published his *A Slacker's Apology*—and to be a self-denominated slacker during that period was an invitation to some sort of violence. This moral courage was manifest in his criticism of the revolutionary fanaticism of those who had earlier shared his socialist ideals; in his persistent rejection, until the day of his death, of political Zionism as a form of tribalism—to the acute distress of many of his friends and admirers; in his struggle against the administrative tyranny of his own institution; in his gallant defense of Bertrand Russell, who was denied an appointment at the City College because of an ignorant magistrate and a cowardly mayor—and this despite Cohen's own original disapproval of the appointment; in his refusal to kowtow to, or be silenced by, some extremist students of the mid-thirties. I am sure he would not have survived the academic life of the sixties. His unquenchable spirit of liberalism, his commitment to tolerance and academic freedom, his mordant criticism of all varieties of fanaticism would have enraged the student extremists and other barbarians of virtue who violently disrupted classrooms and libraries, seized and vandalized offices, and made a mockery of the freedom to teach, learn, and listen. Whatever else his colleagues and administrators would have done, Cohen would not have yielded.

Some reading in Morris Cohen (as well as Carl Becker) might go far in restoring the almost lost meaning and tattered dignity of "Liberal."

## *FRONTIERS*

### Letter from Kenya

DRIVING southwest from Nairobi, within one hour you pass through three different worlds and ages. The center of Nairobi is American-looking—white, high-rising, commercial. This being the headquarters of foreign investment in East Africa, all activities revolve around the banks and the big hotels. Further out, you pass the estates of the English expatriates. Big houses set back away from the roads, hidden behind tall trees. These are the properties of big farmers and tea and coffee plantation owners. The government has been nationalizing their land slowly. So their days are fading. But being used to the privileged lifestyle of colonials, they find it impossible to go back to England. So they stick to their rituals of horse riding, afternoon tea and Sunday service.

Once beyond the city limit, we're in Kikuyu farming country. The Kikuyu grow mostly corn and vegetables. The earth is red, and rich, and early in the year the hillsides are emerald green. But the soil does not retain water well, and once the rainy season is over—by the end of May—then irrigation becomes a big problem. It's startling to realize that, only five miles outside Nairobi, women have to carry water to their fields on their heads—huge barrels with straps across foreheads and slung over bent backs. Three elements are conspicuously missing: the wheel, animal power, and wells. I judge technically farming is still pre-feudal. UNCTAD (United Nation Conference on Trade and Development) is concerned about transfer of technology. It seems to me that even the most basic transfer of technology in this area would make a huge difference. Also, the only people who work in the fields are women. The men just hang around—or they gravitate towards Nairobi.

Southwest of Nairobi are the Ngong Hills. When you get up to the top of the hills, you see the most striking sight. The green stops abruptly

along the crest line. Apparently it rains only on one side and not on the other. Beyond Ngong opens up the greatest land rift in the world. The flat, arid Rift Valley extends all the way from Sudan into Tanzania. It's awesome to look into the valley with nothing at all to impede the vision until you believe you can detect the curvature of the earth. This is Masai country. The Masai are long and gangly and incredibly graceful. Being nomads, they have no use for the Kikuyu. They live in family units of clusters of four or five sunbaked mud and cow-dung huts protected by a ring of thornbush. A man lives with his wives and children in each unit. Each wife builds her own hut and lives in it and, unlike the Kikuyu, there is a certain rough equality between the sexes. Here is the "third world" from Nairobi, hardly touched at all by technological civilization.

Going from Nairobi into the Masai territory, you move from capitalist society into classless or rather pre-class society. The Masai have no sense of man-made boundaries. They go where the Rift Valley goes. They are the only people in Kenya who are entitled to live and hunt in national parks. But the Kikuyu are caught in the middle. While land has been bought and sold for only five years, already agri-business and absentee landlords are moving in. The men, who once enjoyed leisure status in the villages, are moving into the cities to look for jobs and quite often find only unemployment. In Nairobi, all the lowly jobs which in America would be performed by women—waitresses, ushers, chambermaids, salesgirls—are done by men. On the other hand, in the countryside, all the hauling and digging is done by women. The city/country split becomes almost a men/women work split.

Men-women relationships seem primary in Kenya because in a traditional tribal society, before classes are formed, there are three major relationships—men-women relationships; age-youth relationships; and man-nature relationships.

One thing striking about the formation of classes: classes began when prisoners were put to

work as slaves. Classes were first formed out of the ownership of people. But the tribes in Kenya did not take prisoners. When they conquered, they killed everybody—men, women, old, young. For example, the Kikuyu would not even marry a captive Masai woman because they feared she would be a Trojan horse. Which says something interesting: that the woman's tribal loyalty is stronger than her submission to her husband.

The tribes are built around family units. This is where the concept of *Ujamaa* (a "family" sort of socialism) comes from. The families are the basic social structures. Every member in the family is taken care of. No one will be widowed; no one will be orphaned; no one will go begging. But this kind of tribal structure is breaking down fast. At nightfall, the streets of Nairobi are full of homeless children beggars.

Nationhood is certainly a progressive trend in Africa. As in Congo, Nigeria, and Angola, tribal antagonism is one of the major causes of civil wars. Here we see the difference between Africa and Europe. Just as Africa is struggling to merge ethnic differences into national unity, Europe—in Corsica, in the Basque country, in Scotland and Wales, in Croatia, and potentially in the Soviet Union—is trying to stem the vociferous demand for breakup. When you go around Kenya, you can sense a tremendous pride about nationhood. The Kenyans see everything in terms of pre-independence and post-independence in the same way that Chinese use liberation as a dividing line. Yet the legacy of colonialism is such that nationhood also means the disintegration of communities and communal values. Right now it is still not clear what new social relationships and new values are emerging to replace the old. So what you get are tremendous contradictions: between nation and tribe; between city and country; between formal education and education by precept and example; between rejection of age (there are so few old people in Nairobi, other than beggars) and veneration of age (the tribes are still guided by their elders); between diesel power and

human body power. The contradictions are visible in almost every aspect of life.

We met a Mr. Namianya who has spent most of his life going from tribe to tribe to learn about their customs and history from the elders. He has never been to school and yet he is a storehouse of knowledge. He is what the Chinese would call *tuzhuanjia*, or a "folk expert"—a really remarkable man. He is from the Luyia, a western tribe near Lake Victoria. In his father's generation, intermarrying between tribes was taboo. In his grandfather's generation, they would treat each other as enemies and raid each other's cattle. Yet here he is, learning about all the tribes, getting the workmen from sixteen tribes to construct their typical villages side by side in the Bomas of Kenya, so that the young people today, proper Kenyans, will learn about their ancestors' way of life and their multi-tribal traditions. Here he is, also, organizing a dancing troupe made up of young dancers from all different tribes who learn each other's dances, legends, and ceremonies and dance them *together*. One exception: the Masai. They dance only their own very distinctive dance just as they disdainfully live apart from everyone else, even today. But let us try to understand Mr. Namianya: what a tremendous leap of consciousness! To be able to perceive nationhood not as an abstract concept, not simply as a constitution, but as a confluence of tribes, as an interchange and broadening of collective experience. This seems to me to be the only way to transform the imposed legacy of the 1885 Berlin Conference—the forcible carving up of Africa according to colonial balance of power—into a genuine unity of peoples. Mr. Namianya's kind of historical sense will one day resolve the contradiction between tribe and nation.

CORRESPONDENT IN NAIROBI