

In a Howard Beach church 4Jan87, Mayor Koch preached against racial violence, in response to an ItaloAmerican teen male attack on blacks who'd wandered onto Howard Beach's ItaloAmerican turf. Any way of saying that is, must be, tendential: some angle of interest & interpretation will be present. And the subjects of "race" & "violence" are so hot that in everybody's psyche the angle(s) of a particular statement of a instance of the convergence of the two will be conscious, "critically" conscious (in both senses of "critical")....This Thinksheet uses "Howard Beach" to address (1) the human problem of "turf" and (2) the theological-ethical-moral-political need to isolate, in each situation, (a) useful rhetoric, both from useless rhetoric & from harmful rhetoric, (b) the actionably guilty from the relatively innocent, and (c) God from perfectionistic psychosocial notions.The occasion of the Thinksheet is this: I'm appalled at everything I've heard-seen in response to Howard Beach. Commentators paid & unpaid have been saying "Bad-naught-boo-hiss evil" simple-mindedly, selfcongratulatorily, moralistically, in a cacaphonic chorus of tut-tut. No depth. No nuancing. And no help for "the racial situation in America today."

1. Can you have both democracy and "turfs" (ethnic/racial inviolate enclaves, in some sense "apartheid")? Flip the question and it becomes, in the situation of pluralism: Without "turfs," can you have democracy--or only tyranny (as in the USSR's refusal, throughout the history of that government, to permit turfs--eg, the Ukraine)? To these questions my answers are, respectively, YES & NO. Thus my wording "Howard Beach's ItaloAmerican turf."

2. But do I think that government (ie, coercive force) should define & maintain the turfs? NO! I think turfing should be worked out by the flow of subgovernment social forces, the most dramatic of which is young males (such as initiated "the action" in Howard Beach).... It's a paradox of ancient Stoicism, as reflected in the Acts 17 address of "Paul," that the divine (1) defines all humans as God's children and (2) assigns the children to, as it were, separate bedrooms, turfs (vs.26: "the limits of the places where they would live"). Was that theology right about (1), which contrasts with the general biblical "the children of God" as Jews & Christians, and wrong about (2), which conforms to the OT "promised land" & the OT&NT "chosen people"? But my stricture against government's defining & maintaining ethnic-racial turfs is not absolute; for all I know, South Africa may be at least a temporary exception.

3. IRONY: While the liberal political doctrine that anybody should be free to live anywhere is growing in America, social psychology is strengthening the anthropological argument in favor of turf. Absolute pluralism, including the freedom of anybody to live anywhere, while it enriches an individual's options impoverishes human groupings (1) by increasing social fears, (2) by weakening of ingroup sanctions for acceptable behavior, (3) by confusion of manners & morals, and (4) by polarizing ingroup/outgroup individuals/institutions. Socio-moral fabric, social psychologists seem more and more to be saying, fares poorly when group definition does not have the support of turf definition. This witness should be present when we go about defining "justice" and other socio-moral terms.

4. "Look for the woman!" advises the French axiom. "Look for the young men!" say I about turf. The young black males in South Africa, the young white males in Northern Ireland & Howard Beach...testosterone, which squirts strongest in the young male, might be called the turf hormone. Try making a turf analysis of certain young men in history--eg, these two who, with very different ideas of turf, died in their early 30s: Jesus, & Alexander the Great.

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5. A human grouping may assume, lose, seek, or leave turf, ie land. This strand in group identity is important everywhere, nowhere more important than in America. Here, only the Amerinds assumed land in their worldview & cult, which therefore broke down when they failed to maintain their turf. The English Pilgrims left turf (England) & sought turf here--& made full use of Abraham's leaving & seeking of turf. American blacks lost their African turf & learned to sing of a God-given Promised Land of ambiguous relation to the Am. geography but within the Christian religion's soul-orientation: religions of soul are religions of individual choice & therefore inherently (1) bodiless (as to some extent Manichean) & (2) therefore land-transcendent, turfless. (What saves Christianity here from thoroughgoing Manichean soul/body & individual/society & cult/land split is the fact that the motherland of our Faith is Judaism, a complex religion that is theocentric-ethnocentric-geocentric--"geo-" here meaning the Land God gave the People as base for their worship-shalom & for their mission as "a light to the nations.")

6. LAND & POLITICS: Complete land-transcendence (eg, Krishnamurti's "Find yourself," & current Am. parallels) corresponds with political irresponsibility, as complete land-dependence (eg, the Maoris & the Amerinds) correlates with political ineptitude. In between are many positions, such as Brigham Young's "This is the place" & Jesus' "Follow me" (and Judaism), where community makes for land-responsibility. Mutual apartheid, here, has taken many forms, two of which are (1) the European end of religious wars by "Cuius regio, eius religio" (the religion of a particular turf being determined by the turf's government), and (2) Am. interchurch "comity," denominational authorities entering into arrangements (a) to cover all turf with Christian witness and (b) to stay off each others' turfs.

7. AN ACTION CHART on "Howard Beach" might look something like this:

SPHERE	LEVEL	AGENDA
global-national-state-city	"democracy"	?
group: identity, coherence	"cultural racism"	?
individual: what's happening to?	personal: 1:1 relations	?

8. The other ½ of this Thinksheet's project as announced in the intro is the theological dimension of critical thinking on events/issues/"social problems." Here I'm concentrating on Intro (2)(c): Freeing God from "perfectionistic psychosocial notions." COMMENTS:

(1) Cocaigne, Utopia, the Never-Never Land, Eden Reviva, the Classless Society, are dependent on various perfectionisms vis-a-vis deity and/or humanity--perfectionisms alien to the Bible & therefore to Judaism & Christianity. Analyses & prescriptions derived from these false idealistic world-pictures lead to self-induced depression and cynicism in the wake of doomed-from-the-start programs (of church & state)--doomed to waste & woe because the prior situation-definition failed to grasp the factors of enclave & shadow. ("Enclave" was the 1st ½ of my project here, as "turf"; now I'm dealing with "shadow.")

(2) "Shadow," pace Jung, is the dark side of God-humanity-history-heart-hope. It was underestimated in (a) Augustine's "privatio boni" (evil as the absence of good), (b) the Renaissance-Enlightenment sweetness-&-light view of human nature, and (c) degenerate Protestant pop-religion. Here the Bible & Jung are (in the main) on the same side, though he overreads the Bible's God/devil distinction (but once said, in a conversation with Laurens Van der Post, JUNG AND THE STORY OF OUR TIME, Pantheon/75, 222, "Who the devil do they think put the serpent in the Garden of Eden?").

(3) But let's avoid falling into Jung's evil, the Manichean reduction of worldstory to soulstory, with apolitical consequences.