THE LOGICAL STATUS OF CLASS & LAND IN ARGUMENTATION FOR PARTICIPATION OR DOMINANCE

#2198 7 Dec 87
ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636
Phone 617.775.8008
Noncommercial reproduction permitted

It's Pearl Harbor Day '87, and my mind rushes back to what FDR called a "day of infamy." I recall thinking, upon hearing the phrase live on my U. of Chicago radio, "'Clever' at least, as calling it 'infamous' is clever. If you wanted to surprise-attack, why wouldn't you have your ambassador negotiating peace with the nation you were about to attack?" I could look it up in my diary, but I'm sure of my memory of my first thoughts on hearing FDR's annoucement. I didn't object to his speech. He had to whip the country up into a rage to contain Samurai expansionism, "the Greater East Asia (& Pacific Basin) Co-Prosperity Sphere." The Japanese on their islands hoped to do exactly what the British on their islands had done earlier, viz, build an empire with all the unilateral & reciprocal advantages thereof. I had a strong preference for Anglo-American dominance--call it Pax Atlantica. Naturally (ie, considering my mother-culture, the English language & continuing involvement in various forms of British-Christian religion), I heartily thanked God for the succeses of Anglo-Saxon law, which I continue to believe is the best for human beings, and I was thankful for the victories of the English-speaking sailor & soldier & for the spread of English-based trade & religion. And for the 55 English gentlemen who wrote our U.S. Constitution & sequels....The complexity of this Thinksheet's title provides me ample room for a number of loosely connected observations:

1. Contrary to the current opinion of many Americans, the meaning of "pluralism" should not be restricted to the opposite of "chauvinism," which means (Web.) "excessive or blind patriotism," or jingoism as "belligerent foreign policy." I am both a pluralist (but not metaphysically, as I believe in only one Reality) & a culturalist, the two together, as in Web.: "members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization" (underlining mine).

2. Note "confines": the common civilization confines by language, law, custom, norms of behavior & discourse, strictures on violence, clotures on debate in the interest of communal action, world-view, understanding of humanity & of the person-in-society, sense-making (vis-a-vis the holy, the beautiful, the true, the good). In contrast, what I'm running into more & more, both face-to-face & in the media, is the normless utopian relativism that insists (1) that nobody has the right to define right/wrong for anybody else, (2) that on any turf, all cultures have equal standing (and so, eg, the English-language movement is antipluralistic & therefore antiAmerican; and, as someone put it to me a few days ago, "if any religion is studied in our public schools, all other religions should be given equal time"), and (3) that the aim of public-school education should be to shape up world citizens, not American citizens. These relativists insist that the only antonym of their position is absolutism, & refuse to deal with the objective fact that many of us, including me, are as vigorously antiabsolutists as we are antirelativists.

3. Those of us who are here nonideological, being neither relativist (without "confines") nor absolutist (with severe, well-defined "confines"), are in troubles with both camps when we undertake to propose "confines": the absolutists cry "Gotcha!" & the relativists, "We knew you were one of them, though you pretended not to be." Under these pressures, most of my liberal friends fade leftward out of fear of being called absolutist, narrow, fundamentalist, even unChristian. When this wishy-washy but left-tilting timidity looks beyond our shores, it fosters sentimental, moralistic, apolitical, unrealistic views, sug-

gestions, foreign policies. And ironically, this time & again amounts to a new missionary imperialism trying to oppose its values on other peoples (eg democracy, civil rights, relativistic pluralism)---in short, its own program for social "development" (a term the natives feel as having an arrogant edge).

4. The internal logic of relativistic pluralism includes a moralistic, right/wrong sifting of logical class-&-land arguments for participation & dominance. Laughably, in contradiction of its relativism, it tends to dogmatism in incorporating Marxist anticlass argumentation. No matter the rhetoric of any people at any particular stage of their "development," the reality is that all societies, except in some instances in the initial stage (as Gottwald argues for ancient Israel), which is in every case brief, have ruling classes, & "people's" revolutions set up not the rule of the people but a new ruling class in whose decisions the people do or do not participate (to some degree or other). In all this philosophizing, posturing, & politicking, all the gameboard's verbal counters--"rights," "freedoms," "justice," "needs," "powers"--are internally-dynamically defined to suit the particular party's interests, & each party uses the words as if authorized to announce their objective meanings (denotata, relegating other parties' usages as tendentious conotata). In all this, what is happening to the people, whose needs & wants are natural, cultural, & transcultural? The power & pertience of this question can be remembered in Reagan's 1980 rhetoric, sweeping him into the White House: "Are you better off....?"

5. Idealists conceal, then forget, that class-&-land claims are militarily tested & settled. The missionary may arrive before the soldier but seldom survives without the soldier & tends to thrive wherever the soldier succeeds in "pacifying" (or read "oppressing") the natives. Marxism might thrive against Islam among the Afghans if the Soviet soldier could "contain" them. (Yes, there are a few exceptions: Congregational missionaries throve in Hawaii without the American solder.) 'Round the world & through the centuries, the near-universal pattern is: (1) Codex militans, the soldiers pacify & rule the natives under the conqueror's military law; (2) Codex criminalis, a civilian body of criminal law develops within the "confines" of the conqueror's culture; (3) Codex civilis, a civilia body of law regularing land & other properties & rights develops within the "confines" of the conqueror's culture; and (4) In all other matters of the body politic & the body social, the conqueror's culture infiltrates (at least passively) & sets limits, "confines" (whether narrow or wide). And note (5): Change to some other set of "confines" comes militarily (by coup or revolution or defeat abroad or invasion) or evolutionarily (which is far less likely, Gandhi & King being only partial exceptions, as the "confines" in India & America did not shift radically).

6. In our new world of instant global communication, out-groups have new hope that their activities, while militarily hopeless, will have effective persuasive force toward radical change. "International terrorists." The ANC, now bidding to represent all black Africa against Pretoria. The PLO, still trying to consolidate the Arab States against Israel toward (1) "restoring" the Palestinians' land & (2) destroying the State of Israel. Sociodynamically, however, nothing new here: When persuasion fails, try coercion; when coercion fails, try paracoercion ("terrorism") & (refined, judoish forms of) persuasion.

7. Culturism teaches "cuius regio, ejus cultura" (the successful land-claimant determines "the confines of a common civilization"). Eg, Tutu is sufficiently Europeanized to be a full participant in the life of South Africa.