

# CO-EXISTENCE

A Journal for the comparative study of economics, sociology and politics in a changing world.

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This is a

report of a

1946

conference

written by

K.P.?

I don't  
think so

It mentions

K.P. as

a speaker

at the conf.

p. 14

corrected copy.

'WHITHER CIVILIZATION?'

~~An English Conference~~  
A Conference of the Institute of Sociology, England. (1)

Although in its quiet way England has staged no less than a social revolution, he would be a courageous man who would say with assurance that any conscious process of thought accompanied it. There is an almost innate reluctance with the English people to formulate social ideas in words, for their own, time-honoured semantics taught them that words more often divide than unite.

But while there is, thus, no English school of sociology, there is an English method of social action. This technique subordinates thought to life and seeks to find solutions more by the application of the method itself than through any definite results that might be gained by it. For, if one only tried long enough, the question might meanwhile spontaneously resolve itself, and in any case one would at least have avoided the mistake of making it insoluble by attempting to force a solution where none was yet possible.

This method is at its best at those summer meetings which combine the stimulus of a holiday in the countryside with the contemplative seclusion of ashram. And while the method seems to leave all too many factors to the inscrutable working of chance, yet good care is taken not to allow the mills of the intellect to run out of grist. Products of first class thinking are put at the disposal of the gathering which is left free to react to them or not - as collective wisdom deems fit. This permits the very stuff of thought to be tested by the only valid test:- the reactions of seriously interested persons to stark facts of the mind. Of course, there is a prepared programme of lectures, open forums, symposia, and discussion groups;



yet the Holy Ghost is allowed to move freely. The elegant incoherence of the procedure is only apparent: instead of the systematic treatment of a body of recognized knowledge, there is the rare phenomenon of the <sup>utter</sup> exposure of the ~~recesses~~ of utterly sincere <sup>and</sup> minds, who ~~do~~ <sup>by invited speakers who</sup> fear neither misunderstanding, nor even the opprobrium of irrelevance. No provision is made for completeness, there is no 'covering of the ground', nothing but a conversation carried on between discrete and separate viewpoints - a hurling of shafts of light across non too well defined provinces of human life, and leaving it to the spectator to choose between the varied hints of truth disclosed in the process.

Only to those who watch the Conference developing and moving warily from one subject to another does the underlying stream of thought reveal itself in the gestations of the discussion. These seem at times so little articulate as to leave the impression of a chasm between the lecturer and his public. Yet nothing would be more mistaken. The audience is largely composed of experts in their own field, who still pretend to be merely an interested public with no special qualification to judge of the productions of the well-known speakers who put forth their views. Actually, it is the audience which picks up one thread of thought and drops another, pressing for clarification of one aspect, and letting another fade out of vision. The apparently random fits and jerks by which the proceedings move on, merely cover up a dialectic which ultimately is conditioned by the meaning of the total situation. In this case, the Atom Bomb was the true object of concern. It apart from one single address, which was devoted to the subject, and involved important enunciations,

hardly any mention was made of the release of nuclear energy. The collective mind, in its silent rumination, had arrived at the sound conclusion that nothing could be done about it; consequently, the less said the better.

In effect, what approximates to a state of acute distress over the international situation was one of the invisible poles of the Conference. Proof of this fact, that the question of how to judge of the respective contributions of America, Russia, and Britain to the problem of an industrial civilization, was not even mentioned. For any discussion of it would have brought up the issue of Soviet Communism in all its breadth and depth. That again would have catalyzed thought on the world situation, on the Paris Peace Conference, and the other intractable maladies of the hour. A tacit conviction that these should not at this juncture be treated by the clumsy method of public discussion made the conference refrain from tackling the otherwise obvious issue ~~of the three industrial civilizations.~~

If intense though silent political concern was one pole of the meeting, the other pole was ~~formed~~ by the religious issue. While the Atom Bomb was hardly mentioned, the Jewish-Christian tradition moved into focus. The repression of politics resulted in an over-emphasis on religion. This connection, though never mentioned, was probably apparent to all. That may be the reason why neither the differences between the various religious positions, nor even the unbridged gap separating religious and non-religious opinion prevented the meeting from proceeding with its job. Though the fact was never brought into the open, the gathering was deeply split on the question of religion.



The younger generation, on the whole, rejected the traditional lead given by the older members. It was this rift which made Professor Hodges' contribution on the failure of philosophy so poignant. Though personally belonging to the younger generation, he depicted the tragedy of non-religious thought with an almost passionate vehemence. On the other hand, the main religious currents in England represented in the Conference, struck an uncompromising note, as if to meet the challenge of the hour by an extreme formulation of their tenets. Youth, increasingly indifferent towards religion, was thus confronted with a total bid of the various Christian positions. In these circumstances Professor Mumford's sway over the Conference may have been not only due to his leading intellectual position in its proceedings, but also to the fact, that he was the bearer of an insight which a more sheltered world provides.

The immediate issue of the day, the Atom Bomb, was dealt with in an informal, but authoritative fashion. The recently formed Atomic Scientists' Association, comprising a considerable part of British nuclear physicists, was represented by its President, N.F. Mott, of Reading University, Fellow of the Royal Society. His address, chaired by G.W. Scott Blair, was felt to be an important event. Professor Mott declared that he, similarly to his colleagues in America, wished to address himself to the public not as a scientist but as a citizen. 'Science can not flourish behind barbed wire - in the atmosphere of ten years' prison sentences', he said, alluding to the recent conviction of the King's College physicist, Dr. Nunn-May. England does not fear the spirit of friendly rivalry either with the scientists of the USA or with those of the USSR. After these introductory remarks he warned of

exaggerations in regard to the military effects of the use of the Atom Bomb under the present circumstances. As long as Atom Bombs - and this certainly would not be the case within the next years - could not be produced by the 10,000/the bomb was not a war-winning weapon. Its destructive effect was, on the whole, comparable to a raid of 1000 bombers carrying ordinary bombs. Yet, obliteration bombing did not cut short the German war effort. In effect, German war production continued to increase right up to the end of 1944. Now, both the USA and the USSR possess numerous industrial centres the units of which are dispersed. Short of several ten thousand bombs nothing in the way of a decisive military defeat could be inflicted on either of them. "To call a spade a spade", he said, "the Red Army would not be stopped on its march on Calais." The Atomic Scientists' Association based its practical policy on the Lillenthal Report, which he called "one of the historical documents of the age". He supported its proposals to set up an Atomic Development Authority, to own all uranium and thorium deposits of the globe, to own the piles, and become the prime body of atom research in the world. An outlawing of the use of atom bombs would be mere eye-wash. An international police force armed with atom bombs could not avert wars. Would you agree, he asked, to the Atom Bomb being used as a policing measure, for instance in Palestine? Or to stop Argentina from misbehaving? A strong man can be restrained only by fighting him. By punitive measures alone it was not possible to prevent any powerful nation from making bombs. The use of the Atom Bomb must therefore be envisaged in the large scale war of Great Powers. We must teach the nations to live together, because they must. The Atomic Scientists' Association does not combine its proposals with the demand of the

'veto



'veto' should be dropped in the Security Council. Even though the Russians are overdoing the use of the 'veto' UNO without Russia would no longer be an international authority in the true sense of the term. What we need is an acceptance by the Russians of the Lighthall Report, Inspection on both sides of the frontier would then start. We must peg away until this happens. Russia has changed her policy more than once in the past; She may do so again. The Atomic Scientist's Association is determined to keep this realistic view before the public eye. The audience gave an ovation to Professor Mott for his public-spirited initiative. <sup>(2)</sup>

On the theoretical level of politics two lectures offered original contributions: Professor George Catlin, late of Cornell University, and Professor Hsun-Cheng Shao, of National Tsinghua University, Peiping. An orientalised West was being confronted by an occidentalised East. Professor Catlin said: "When we see the new teaching of psychologists, educationalists, philosophers, political scientists, anthropologists all pointing in the same direction, we may be sure that something will emerge as a new cast of thought, as significant in its day as the work of Adam Smith or of Jeremy Bentham (or of Karl Marx)" The problem of power consisted, this was increasingly realized, in superseding its dominative forms by its co-operative forms. This passed on into being a problem in education and even religion. Here the issues of teleology, that is, of the norms of the society required, became all important. He had taken up this position in 1929 and found no reason to withdraw from it in 1946.

*From* A galaxy of minds was moving in the same general direction. Novelists, such as A. Huxley, S. Maugham, V. Cronin, depicted the 'good

man'of Leibniz's Perennial Philosophy. Writers such as E. Gill, J. Middleton Murry, J. Macmurray, G. Heard or R.M. MacIver developed and deepened the idea of community. Educational psychologists, such as Isaacs, Anderson and Korney; Psychoanalysts, such as Sully<sup>W</sup>, Harding, Bayard West or Glover; social anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict, Dollard and Malinowski had made important discoveries about man as a co-operative being. Niebuhr's analysis of pride, Russell's diagnosis of power gave substance to the 'remedial approach' broadly followed by Albert Schweitzer, M.K. Gandhi and Aldous Huxley. As a practical matter, Catlin said, a great increase is required in the power of the religious spirit. He called for an unqualified support of organized religion, preferably of the Roman Church, for only in <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ way can the right psychological training be translated into political terms. In a conversation which he recently had with Gandhi the Mahatma told him that "no religious man talks about rights and political guarantees; he is never a 'minority', because he feels himself to be with God". This lands ~~incomprehensible~~ Catlin with the question "Must we, in the name of Christianity, abolish all police and all courts?" But if so, what about Russia, the enemy of the Roman Church? ~~Should the USSR go unrestrained? No, were sound~~ The medieval scholastics ~~established~~ when they established "the later churchly doctrine" on the subordinate and limited use of the secular sword. Our world tribunal is UNO, and its armed executive is the secular sword. Nothing should stop us in our determination "to enforce without flinching the decisions of the world tribunal against the makers of all disorders".

While Catlin was calling on the mystics of the East to help us in <sup>fighting</sup> ~~writing~~ the balance of Western politics, Professor Shao offered



*Finally, much*

a remarkable application of the rational political science of the East to our problems. Traditional political thought in China is often falsely regarded as 'philosophical' in the contemplative sense of the term and as 'moral', that is, as an approach to the question of right behaviour. Actually, Chinese political thought is based on stark realism in respect to the nature of the deadlock which is at the heart of political and social problems. Far from regarding that deadlock merely as a matter of ignorance (as Socrates might have put it) or of man's moral inadequacy (a view towards which the Christian tends), he accepts it as real. Consequently Chinese tradition is suspicious of 'solutions' that would directly interfere with the deadlock and suppress one of its factors. Often time is needed for any spontaneous shift in the underlying forces to work itself out and permit of a direct solution. Again the gaining of time is not a mere matter of patience and toleration - although the techniques of these virtues are highly developed - but of a concrete understanding of the nature of the balances involved. Accordingly, Professor Shao's conclusions in regard to the present world crisis are concrete. A world state is not yet possible; to believe in its proximity is therefore dangerous. On the one hand, it prevents us from facing actualities, on the other, it leads to the futile (and undesirable) attempt to eliminate differences by neglecting them. Here lies the danger of a utopian cosmopolitanism. Even in view of the recent advance in scientific discoveries with their threatening implications the existing differences are not necessarily detrimental to mankind, provided, that the edge of the differences can be blunted. In the future as in the past such differences can contribute much to man's collectiv

*From T*

To } collective existence as long as they are rationally controlled, without, however being eliminated through a process of levelling. ] Admittedly, the present bi-polar power constellation of Anglo-American democracy vs. Soviet Communism may well lead to catastrophe. But it is not beyond the range of the possible to introduce such modifications as would make it workable and safe. The prime need is for the creation of a neutral belt or additional 'poles of power' which are independent of the two dominating poles in the world to-day, and thus form a multi-polar system. In Europe, Graeco-Latin civilization should be fostered and organized under the moral and cultural leadership of France, as one of the neutral poles. In Asia, China will have to bear the burden of being the neutral pole, although she may have to go through a tragic process of transformation before achieving recovery and prosperity, she will live up to the task of 'blunting' the edges.

An even richer orchestration than for the discussion of politics was provided for that of religion. Professor H.A. Hodges, of Reading University, opened up with an address on 'Philosophy and Civilization', which asserted that philosophy had ceased to provide any basis for the use of reason. "How long can such a civilization stand?" he asked again and again. The Roman Catholic thinker Monsignor Ronald Knox amazed the conference by his answer which was to the effect that Christianity was indifferent to the future of civilization. Donald Mackinnon, of Keble and Balliol Colleges, made it, on the contrary, the crucial test of Christianity, whether it is or is not able to save civilization. He called this religion's 'total engagement in society'. Confronted with the schism between agnostic and Christian Professor Hodges demanded a new consciousness in which the two can meet. Without



such an 'understanding of understanding' the diremption of our civilization was final.

Hellenism, the self-conscious civilization of the Greeks, Professor Rodes said, is the only valid conception of civilization, known to the philosopher. It postulates man as the rational animal, who fulfills his purpose in a city state community, ruled by reason. He is capable of an intellectual contemplation of the Universe, because the universe itself is rational. In the seventeenth century this concept was enriched: observation and experiment led to 'progressive methods' employed in exploring a developing world. Reason now meant Enlightenment; deliberate purpose replaced intuition and emotion; self-control offered as the content of the idea of freedom. Still, man and the world had a purpose, and man was akin to a world of reason. The fatal turning of the screw happened in the nineteenth century. Positive science and psychology undermined the rational idea of the world. Civilization appeared as the result of unconscious trends; the world, as an accident; ~~In~~ <sup>Will</sup> Marx and ~~in~~ Spencer this was still accompanied by a humanist outlook and confidence in the future - 'an optimism without cause'. For survival - the highest value in the new evolutionism - depended upon factors, none of which was 'civilized'. For strength, cunning and co-operation may well reach their peak in violence, applied science, and the hard-instinct, respectively. No longer is an appeal to the conception of man as a rational animal implied. Man can not understand a universe which is not understandable. Nor would understanding be of value once survival does not involve civilization. Philosophy has criticized itself out of existence. There is no basis for the use of reason. "How long can such a civilization stand?" On this

note of unqualified despair Professor Hodges closed.

Monsignor Knox disowned civilization in the name of religion. The work of the Church is to colonize Heaven, the work of the reformer is to breed for Utopia. Religion thrives when civilization is sick. It is weak where civilization is strong. In the Athens of Pericles religion was mere lukewarm municipal piety; the Augustinian period and the Renaissance were low points of religion. Religion and civilization were inimical - except where religion gains strength by revolting against civilization, or civilization ~~system~~ advanced religion by persecuting it. "As I hauling down the flag of religion, and handing over", Knox said, "to the poet, the artist, the scientist, the philosopher? No, civilization can exist without them. The Victorians had no art, the High Middle Ages no science, the Augustinian age no philosophy. These adornments of life are in truth parasitic on the general well-being of society. The criteria of civilization are security of life, security and comfort. Yet it must decay if the age has lost the instinct of living dangerously. That precisely is happening in our time. The modern state, if it can keep clear of war and palace revolution is omnipotent: man exists for the State. Behind the 'Iron curtain' the last remnants of democracy are being stamped out. And it is <sup>not much</sup> better in the West. Artists, scientists, philosophers, divines, should unite against the State, to avert the dehumanization of humanity. True, there are quarrels between them, but all must concentrate on Enemy No. 1, the menace of state-encroachment. Private quarrels can be settled later.

To no views did the conference react more strongly than to those so brilliantly expressed by Monsignor Knox. His intellectual nihilism



was all the more clearly realized as it was proclaimed in the name of religion. All too obviously his 'Ecrasez l'infame' was hurled against the State with the intent of enthroning the Church.

Ronald MacKinnon ~~unwittingly~~ raised the religious issue ~~down~~ with an ~~unintentional~~ incisiveness reminiscent of Søren Kierkegaard's dialectic a century ago. His response was both global and total. Religion entered into the bitter battles fought in India and Palestine to-day. The Nazi creed confronted the Christian world. And in the clash between Russia and the West an essential component was introduced by the ~~unintentional~~ interaction of Marxist doctrine and the fervent Christian belief of an unreformed Church. "Christians are becoming self-conscious, <sup>perhaps</sup> ~~that~~/for the first time," he said, "that their religion involves a total engagement in the life of the society in which a Christian has to live". Eventually, in Nazi Germany, Christians overcame the Lutheran split between Faith and State. Resisting on the religious issue, they were driven to resist on the political plane as well. Religious thinking reveals itself by its crucial quality; for, unless it is crucial it is nothing. "Russia can attack the democracies successfully," he said, "on one point: on the issue of imperialism. / Indeed, how far do the achievements of democracy depend directly on imperial circumstances? Our consciences are still troubled by Hiroshima, Nagasaki? By its power to gain illumination on the relation between Russia and the West, our religion will be judged."

In spite of the ~~transcendentalism~~ <sup>which he shared with Knox,</sup> ~~the~~ the theology and ~~the~~ politics of MacKinnon were radically opposed to those of ~~the~~ Knox who <sup>had</sup> preached the total disengagement of religion from civilization.

✓ [ Professor Lewis Mumford's address was chaired by Sir Alfred Zimmern, late Professor of International Affairs, Oxford University. The problem of our civilization, Sir Alfred said, arose on three distinct levels: On the international plane, which involved the rule of law and the control of nuclear energy; on the plane of the good society which demanded planning for welfare as well as social equality; on the philosophical or religious plane, which required the understanding of life on its deeper levels. In all three, he regarded Mumford as a leader of our time. ]

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Lewis Mumford is a great name in England. His 'Culture of Cities' and 'Condition of Man' rescued for Britain the inheritance of Patrick Geddes, the Scottish genius, and made their author perhaps the strongest single influence informing the revival of urban civilization in that country. With Aneurin Bevan's housing schemes and Lewis Silkin's New Towns Bill in the limelight, Mumford's ideas are far from being of merely academic importance in a country ~~in~~ which is in the course of re-shaping ~~the~~ its <sup>cultural</sup> [whole national] existence.

Mumford possesses what is needed to transform theories and vistas into a message. His mind shoves aside all the massive obstacles that bar the way, then leaves the ground and soars. It does this at the precise point where the argument hitherto based on fact becomes a motive power of imagination. "The task before me," he began, "is an impossible task; but our age has to attempt to fulfill the impossible". The first half of the sentence accounts for the facts; the second arouses our slumbering moral faculties. The call is not contrary to reason; yet, in order to be heard, it demands a re-interpretation of the functions of reason. This is attained by virtue of a fundamental-



ism which erects the idea of man's communal achievements into an absolute - let our ideals be subordinated to the single aim of saving the sources of higher life. Ultimately, human civilization is a unity of its parts and functions, none of which is to be allowed to turn in an act of self-destruction on the idea of a meaningful common life. Far from being a construct<sup>ion</sup> of mere wish-fulfillment, such an ideal of civilization has a hard core of realism. It does not make absolutes of knowledge, efficiency, or even peace; it sets the contents of life above life itself. We must forego our culture as it is, our civilization as it stands, our personality which we secretly idolize. We must, as individuals, strengthen our weakest sides, and weaken our strongest. Thus only can civilization be ~~now~~ a unity, and live on. As far as the English mind is concerned the secret of Mansford's appeal is twofold. The hint ~~given~~ at a crucial experience makes him an authentic witness to some; to others/<sup>the</sup> dethronement of absolutes transcending common human existence appears as a re-statement of the case for reason.

Karl Polanyi, of the Oxford Extra-Mural Delegacy, attempted to establish on new foundations man's freedom to shape his own civilization. His address amounted to a rejection of the very concept of economic determinism which would limit this freedom. Man's dependence upon material goods - the economic factor - is not translated (as it is with some animals) into an immediate motive. What has been thus identified during the past century is nothing other than the working of the market-economy, which existed during the nineteenth century but which, <sup>the</sup> except in the United States - is in our time rapidly disappearing. Its extreme peculiarity was twofold: First, it included markets for labour and land, that is, for man and nature; consequently the

whole of society was embedded in the economic system. Secondly, motives for participating in production were reduced to fear of hunger and hope of gain; consequently, ~~in this context~~, these incentives were reasonably regarded as being 'economic'. Actually, in no other human society of which we know are hunger and gain motives for participating in production. On the contrary, such motives are of that 'mixed' character which we usually associate with civic duties. The economic system is there <sup>very</sup> embedded in social relations, and these determine the form of economic institutions. No 'economic determinism' exists under such conditions. <sup>For</sup> Talk about the Road to Serfdom in a planned economy was proof of an uncritical belief in the validity, in general, of economic determinism. Such a belief is a failure to recognize the peculiar circumstances in which ~~the~~ economic determinism was possible, namely, a market-economy. True, much of what we have come to cherish as freedom, was a by-product of market-economy. In future we shall have to plan for some of it. The Bill of Rights will have to be extended into the industrial field, protecting the individual against abuses of the power agglomerated in the hands of governmental or Trade Union authorities. There is no reason for our not having as much freedom in a planned society as we wish to possess. Outside a market-society, it is <sup>common</sup> human <sup>in</sup> ideas, not economics, which ~~are~~ <sup>is</sup> determinative.

<sup>nature</sup> The educational problem was brought to the fore by Dr. John Bowlby and ~~known~~ Kenneth Richmond, Regional Education Officer of the British Broadcasting Corporation.



Bowlby offered a most instructive account on educational experiments conducted with the help of 'theatrical masks' in the USA, while Mr. Richmond argued for a more equalitarian system of general education in Britain, combined with a reform of teaching method. Noel F. Newsome, late ~~Winn~~ Editor of the European News Services of the B.B.C., a policy-making member of the Liberal Party, gave a forthright and embracing presentation of problems of freedom in a planned society. *M.B.*

*white line* → *A. Farquharson, Secretary of the Institute, organized the Conference & conducted discussions*

The problem of the three civilizations - American, Russian, British - was, as we said, not touched upon. Concern about the day after to-morrow impinged upon the freedom to scan the horizon. *S/*

Footnotes.

1) The Conference was held at Reading University, July 26th to August 1st 1946. It was organized by ~~Mr.~~ Alexander Farquharson, Secretary of the Institute of Sociology. *M.R.*

2) At the close of the Conference the following was unanimously adopted as part of the resolutions:

"This Conference called to consider 'Whither civilization in the atomic age' and having reviewed political, economic, educational and religious trends, records the following resolutions:

"6. There was a progressive decline of moral judgment during the war, as evidenced by the widespread acceptance of obliteration bombing and carried a big stage further by the use without warning of the atom bomb.

The Conference welcomes the initiative taken by the Atomic Scientists' Association of America and of Great Britain in bringing these issues before the public.

It calls upon its fellow citizens to urge the government to give full support to the Baruch plan for the control of atomic energy and to support similar provisions against the use of all weapons of indiscriminate extermination."

The Chairman of the Conference Session at which the resolutions were adopted, emphasized, that the resolutions were an act of the Conference and did not commit the Institute.