

CIRCULATION OF THOUGHT - 1956

Feringer notes
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1. In social science, laws we make can be broken.

2. In traditional social science humankind is identified with nature; the assumption is that our "nature" is a given that we cannot avoid or change. It is prescribed. "Tricks to aid memory are not related to our development except in a minor way." (p.2/1)

3. Natural laws cannot be broken, but in social science, we have the freedom to break laws or customs followed in society.

ERH makes a number of distinctions between social and natural science throughout this essay:

1) Laws discovered about nature must be assumed to be absolute, otherwise no prediction is possible. Laws related to social behavior are the opposite, to break them may signal a decline in the society or a change for the better leading to possible war or new customs. 2) Natural science laws last forever because they are only possible for dead matter that is basically unalterable, like sticks and stones - dead things in other words. Social science laws, by contrast are transient because humankind is yet unfinished, our nature is changing, what will hold a society together in one age will be insufficient in another.

4. Behavior that we call "natural", such as greed, lying, thievery, etc, may be natural (common), but these qualities are antisocial. What ERH is driving at is that while some laws of nature may describe society, we are free to break out of such a mold, but there is always a price to pay. The child who is not taught obedience causes undesired consequences eventually. Education can change our nature. When anti-social behavior occurs, there may be war to pay.

The law, for instance of child up-bringing, to obey, listen, read, play etc. (the first four

"tones of the spirit"). When these are broken, when the child is made happy instead of learning them, society pays later.(p.1-6)

BREAKING LAWS OF SOCIETY WEAKENS OR DESTROYS THE SOCIETY.

5.It is also a social law that we are free not to act the same. If one man is stupid in business and loses his money, another may take advantage and prosper.

6.Social science and natural science differ in their purpose and method. Breaking a social rule has very different consequences from breaking a natural science rule.

7.Three attitudes in this country :

1) A common belief is that our thoughts are a private affair (i.e. religious beliefs). This is wrong! Our mind is a public affair because we think in terms of language. Since all thought that allows us to grow must be in terms of language and must receive validation from others, what we think is of public concern.

This is to say, our considered thought, our thoughtful thoughts, as contrasted with mental garbage that is not what we wish to commit ourselves to. To keep an open mind before making a decision is, of course, important. But eventually, a commitment we must make. Before commitment to marriage, one is private; but real life accepts the notion that a public commitment must be made.

2) What are called "public attitudes" are very real in the form of customs and cultural mores. 3) There is an attitude beyond our laws, that which must be sanctioned by custom and the church. What some call - God's law. When we truly believe in something, like a friendship, or our country, or to marriage, then we must turn private to public.

8.To live is to respect these laws of society, commit to action to uphold them when necessary (such as opposing injustice), and be willing to pay the price. To stand up for principles in which we believe and for which we will sacrifice is a necessity for all persons if they wish to see a more decent community.

Much of the time we are cowards, too weak to do this. But we become mature to the degree that we do take stands. AS LONG AS WE RECOGNIZE AND RESPECT GOOD DEEDS, SOCIETY WILL SURVIVE.

"Living" is the power to overcome social gravity in this way - to stand against those too weak to speak out and to act at a given moment.

9.To summarize:

...social laws only exist as long as we treat each other as members of one body, of one society, as one man's acts react on somebody else, as your abusing the law will force the people

to change the law for me, what I tried to tell you, which is the interesting thing about society. Your mistake leads to the fences around my action. I'm forbidden certain things because you broke the law, or vice versa.

As long as you have solidarity it is perhaps not so very difficult for you now to grasp that the circulation of thought presupposes that there is one thought, one thinking process for all mankind. And what you try is to secure your part in it, your membership, your participation in this circulation of thought. But that your nice ideas, that you have your private ideas, or your private knowledge, or your private education is an illusion. (p.20)

10. In a more general tone ERH says that we are all dogmatic to some extent, but the difference between him and his students is:

...you don't know your dogmas, and I know mine. So I can be spoken to, and you cannot be spoken to. For example, you have the dogma that you have no dogma.

You also have the dogma that nature exists, or evolution...That is, you do not see that these are transient, human attempts to explain existence, and that you at any minute must be ready to sacrifice the term "nature." (pp.20,21)

11. People who speak to one another are not natural. We are human creatures, because we are still in the process of being unfinished. Therefore we have no final nature. And people who achieve great acts, Demosthenes, Helen Keller, Lincoln, etc. become "super-natural." "Nature is that which man has to defy in order to come to life." (p.21) As pointed out above, it is natural to be self-centered, greedy, to lie to avoid an uncomfortable situation, etc.

12. Humankind is that which nature cannot give, such as naming our children. "What nature cannot give is the content of the social sciences." (p.22)

The spirit of a person is one's soul. When one believes in the unity of mankind, one looks at individuals in a different manner. One's face will often express the inner spirit. Nature does not incur distinctions between individuals except in obvious and superficial ways, like a woman wearing lipstick, or our differences in height or hair color. Modern art paints man as natural - no distinction between individuals, no uniqueness.

13. We are "coined" by past events. Ever since the GOOD SAMARITAN, if we believe in that behavior as helping create a good society, then that event influences what we become.

The living God is that spirit which we allow our actions to be patterned after. "The first commandment is the backbone of any social science..."

None of this has anything to do with natural birth, but with the ideas that humankind is willing to abide by. And this is why the circulation of thought is crucial to human survival.

A child is not either a son or a daughter. Even the words "son" and "daughter" are already

great offices in humanity, and that's why we call the first man who allowed himself to be sculptured all his life, we call him "the son." (p.27)

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