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Nationalism and Human Freedom

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Mr. Robert Ardrey in his book entitled **The Territorial Imperative** (Sub-title: "A Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations") maintains that the instinct to gain and defend a clearly defined piece of territory is possibly stronger and even more basic to human nature than the sex drive. From the rapidly expanding body of new biological and ethological findings Mr. Ardrey has made an impressive analysis of the way in which animals and some other creatures respond to an inherent, genetically determined impulse which can be called the territorial principle or territorial imperative. This principle has numerous ramifications including the basic dynamics of nationalism. Since nationalism is a burning issue among the students of Hong Kong at the present time it may be illuminating to look at the situation here in the light of Ardrey's analysis.

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territorial instinct and may, perhaps, be seen in proper perspective and controlled appropriately only when its biological roots are understood.

Nationalism or patriotism is often regarded as an unquestioned value in itself, a simple justification for unswerving loyalty and utter obedience to a cause. "My country, right or wrong" is not always proclaimed in a facetious way. It can be spoken with passion and reverence. It can be recited as the reason for actions that by any other standards are inhuman and inexcusable. Nationalism, like any other strong human concern, is ambiguous in its creative and destructive possibilities. It may produce a kind of nobility in certain circumstances and it may also generate infamy and abomination. If nationalism as an expression of the territorial imperative is an "open instinct" in man which is susceptible to modification through learning then we cannot afford to leave it unexamined. The more patriotism is blind the more it approximates the closed in-

students in making their protests can be understood in light of the various aspects of the territorial instinct as Ardrey understand it.

The several laws of the territorial principle are described by Ardrey as the proprietor's innate defence, the enhancement of energy, cooperation and acceptance of leadership, and a formula that he designates $A=E+h$ which stands for Amity equals Enmity plus hazard. Each of these so-called laws can be seen to be operative in the Tiao Yu Tai dispute. If one asks "Why on earth should Hong Kong students be so concerned about some largely uninhabited strips of land in the China Sea?" the answer is at least partly that these islands are providing the first opportunity that the students have ever had to exercise their instinct to defend a piece of territory in any overt way.

Defence of territory is related to the instinct of aggression which is also exercised in the islands dispute. Not everyone would agree that man has an **instinct** of aggression but

feelings. The Canadian national anthem that moves my territorial feelings repeats several times the words "we stand on guard, we stand on guard for thee" and I feel very noble and righteous when I stand and sing this song. Nevertheless, it is valuable to see this patriotic righteousness in perspective because there is actually no good reason why such an instinctive value should automatically take precedence over other possible values that might command my allegiance and elicit a higher kind of righteousness from me than mere territorial defence. There are an infinite number of good human causes that may deserve one's energy and commitment more than the struggle to preserve national boundaries where they are in dispute.

Territorial righteousness appears to produce what Ardrey calls a "biological reward, that mysterious enhancement of energy and resolution ... which invests the proprietor on his own vested acres." (p. 116) Could it be possible that the mysteri-

a burning issue among the students of Hong Kong at the present time it may be illuminating to look at the situation here in the light of Ardrey's analysis.

First, it is necessary to be clear exactly what Ardrey means when he claims that human beings as well as some other creatures have an **instinct** to gain and defend a piece of territory. The term "instinct" refers to "innate, genetically determined behavior." Most social scientists, with the possible exception of a few absolute determinists, are reluctant to attribute many instincts to man who gives evidence of having the ability to control his own functioning. The concern for territory and the manifestation of this concern in nationalism would appear to be well within the scope of man's self-control and beyond the aegis of genetic determination or, in other words, beyond instinct. A distinction must be made, however, between "closed instincts" and "open instincts." The former apply to behavior that is totally "programmed" or determined by the creature's genetic make-up. The latter refer to kinds of behavior that are initially determined by genetic make-up but which are also open to development through learning. It is certainly true that many animals appear to have such an "open instinct" in the matter of the territorial imperative and it is at least credible that man also has such an instinct, especially when one considers the history of irrational human wars and family feuds that have been fought for the sake of property. Nationalism is fundamentally an expression of the

family and abomination. If nationalism as an expression of the territorial imperative is an "open instinct" in man which is susceptible to modification through learning then we cannot afford to leave it unexamined. The more patriotism is blind the more it approximates the closed instincts of the lower creatures. The more nationalism is subordinated to considered human values the more man appropriates his proper dignity as a free, self directed being. Man's territorial instincts can be tempered by other concerns and can be channeled in such a way as to serve man's highest purposes.

There is no question that territory satisfies some basic human needs. Ardrey lists these as the need for security, stimulation and identity which are the solution to anxiety, boredom and anonymity, respectively. All three needs are easily recognizable in the citizens and students of Hong Kong, especially the needs for identity and security. These two problems are so obviously real for the inhabitants of this small colonial enclave on the fringe of a mighty nation that they require little comment. As the situation now stands, Hong Kong appears to be some kind of diabolical invention that is designed to frustrate the deep yearning of its people for national identity and territorial security. There are indications, however, that recently the young people are satisfying their need for identity, if not security, through a pan-Chinese nationalism that is expressing itself principally through the Tiao Yu Tai islands dispute. This dispute and the actions taken by the

that the students have ever had to exercise their instinct to defend a piece of territory in any overt way.

Defence of territory is related to the instinct of aggression which is also exercised in the islands dispute. Not everyone would agree that man has an **instinct** of aggression but Ardrey's evidence is convincing. In our situation here it is otherwise difficult to account for such spiteful acts as the repeated flattening of the automobile tires of a Japanese lecturer who had nothing whatever to do with the islands dispute except by accident of his nationality.

Yet another related factor is the way in which animals, including man, attribute righteousness to the defenders of property. Ethologists have observed that in territorial disputes between larger and smaller animals of the same species the animals often appear to recognize the rightness of the original owner of the territory in defending it so that larger animals will flee from the territory of smaller ones even though they have every advantage in size and strength to take over the territory by sheer force. Man is usually more sophisticated in his territorial aggressions but we still have a trace of this instinct evident in the way we attribute nobility and righteousness to the courageous defenders of their own territory against outside aggressors. The nationalistic movies and ballets coming out of the People's Republic of China recently illustrate this way of thinking very clearly as do the art, music and literature from any country which is strongly nationalistic or which is concerned to strengthen nationalistic

where they are in dispute. Territorial righteousness appears to produce what Ardrey calls a "biological reward, that mysterious enhancement of energy and resolution . . . which invests the proprietor on his own vested acres." (p. 116) Could it be possible that the mysterious enhancement of energy and resolution evident in the student movement in Hong Kong in the past couple of years is partly a biological reward of the increasingly overt expression of pan-Chinese nationalism? If so, one would be mistaken to disparage it in principle. Ardrey claims that this biological reward "has been the source of all freedom, the curse on the despot, and the last desperate roadblock in the path of aggression's might" (p. 117) It would also be a mistake to assume that the biological reward is worth seeking simply for its own sake. Nationalistic fervor has produced more atrocities than freedom in history. It should not be sought or welcomed as an unexamined benefit.

Along with the enhancement of energy that issues from territorial defence there is an observable tendency for the defenders to increase their cooperation and to accept leadership. One of the oldest tricks in the game of politics is for a national leader to cultivate a foreign enemy in order to unite his own nation under his leadership. This trick is so old in fact that it employs one of the laws of the territorial imperative that can be seen in operation in many species of animals and birds. This

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law can be expressed in a formula $A=E+h$. Fully expressed the law is as follows: "The amity ... which an animal expresses for others of its kind will be equal to the sum of the forces of enmity and hazard which are arrayed against it" (p. 270) If a herd of wild animals is threatened by a forest fire, for example, its enmity and aggressiveness against a rival herd will be reduced and the amity among the members of the herd will be increased. Conversely, if the hazard is reduced the enmity and aggressiveness would have to be increased in order to maintain the same level of amity within the group. These group dynamics apply also in human situations and can be manipulated by cynical leadership that is willing to abandon the question of justice for the sake of strengthening their own following.

In the Tiao Yu Tai dispute in Hong Kong there is not much evidence of cynical leadership as far as I know but the dynamics of the $A=E+h$ formula can be detected. The hazard factor has mostly remained small because the threat of a Japanese attack is hardly immanent. The strength of amity or cooperation and acceptance of leadership among the students has consequently depended largely on the enmity factor alone. Since the leadership has not been cynical in the cultivation of

enmity the movement had a rather slow start. However, once the hazard factor was increased in the form of local police threats against student demonstrations the amity factor strengthened correspondingly. Is it safe to draw the conclusion now that with reduced hazard from the police there will also be a reduced strength of cooperation and acceptance of leadership in the movement?

The amity-enmity complex, like all the other laws related to it, has ambiguous possibilities for good and ill. Man, unlike other animals, is able to select the objects of his enmity and aggression according to his own chosen criteria. He can be subtle and discriminating in the way he opposes what he is against. Because we have this capacity we also have the responsibility of examining our aggressive behaviour and of channeling it only in worthy causes. Because our instincts are open to modification we are responsible not only for the objects of our aggression but for the style of our aggression. The most important question facing the students now is how they will use their newly found collective power and what will be the objects of their opposition. It is conceivable that the awakened nationalism of the young people in Hong Kong could be exploited by political factions through a subtle campaign of promoting enmity against the Japanese or Ameri-

cans. It is also possible that the students might reject such manipulation because they see the basic anomaly of pursuing patriotic goals with methods and consequences that damage the dignity of one's national identity.

There have been some encouraging examples of the students investing their cooperation and leadership in causes that are not merely nationalistic but humanistic. The blind workers' dispute was one of the finest of such examples. Students identified their enemy as the structures and attitudes of a society that was preventing the disadvantaged from achieving the social justice that is their due. The cooperation of the students was extremely effective in realizing the objectives decided upon by the leadership. Aggressiveness was restrained and directed into creative rather than destructive channels. In this dispute a pattern was set which might well be a model for further action by the students.

If we look at such an illustration it can be seen that the territorial principle can be operative when the objects of defence and aggression are abstract values rather than acres or square miles of land. Righteousness can characterize the defence of abstract values as well as the defence of property. Unlike other animals, man has the ability to think ab-

stractly and to deliberate about the values to which he will commit himself. This is what makes human freedom possible. It must be accepted that man, like the other creatures, has inherent, genetically determined impulses that influence his behaviour; but in man's case more than in any other creature the instincts are "open" to deliberate direction. If man does not direct his instincts he cannot be called free. Uninhibited behaviour is not truly free despite the popular romantic approval of it. It follows that unexamined nationalism is below the dignity of a free man. If we are to be free we have no choice but to choose our values with supreme care and concern and then try to apply them in all our behaviour. Further more, if there are human values that are true and others that are false, then choosing false values will also destroy our freedom. To be in error is not to be free. Of course, no one can prove absolutely which values are true and which false, but the great spiritual leaders in history are more dependable as guides than nationalistic leaders are. It is also safe to conclude that humanitarian values are more important than property values. Nationalism must be subordinate to higher human values or it can easily destroy the fundamental human freedom that it ostensibly seeks to create.