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Concerning Urbanism

and

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William Linn Westermann.

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by

WILLIAM LINN WESTERMANN

In the nineteenth century there was a wide-spread feeling that the massing of human beings in the the great urban agglomerations which were then re-shaping the social problems of the time tended to foster social viciousness in the individuals who lived in the cities. The same kinds of people did not develop or display these vicious tendencies when they were dispersed in the separate households of farm life or in the healthy rural surroundings of the villages. This is an attitude which some sociologists have called «the rural bias». Because its literary expression has taken the form of a negative reaction against the city rather than a positive reaction toward village or countryside, for the purpose of this paper it is better to call this feeling «the anti-urban bias».

The negative reaction against city living expressed itself in the United States and in Europe in two phases. The first phase appeared at the time when urban aggregations had begun to bring about fundamental changes in the existing structure of the then agricultural societies, predominantly organized in village, town and small-city units. The traditional mores majorum were disintegrating. In this period, which may roughly be said to have covered the first half of the nineteenth century, the anti-urban reaction took the form of hatred, or of fear, of the city. This attitude found expression in poems similar to the following naive American verses addressed to a country girl «who had expressed a wish to lead a town life»:

«Sweet Mary, sigh not for the town
Where vice and folly reign;
.....
There foul Ambition loves to dwell,
False Pride and lust of Fame,
There Malice and Revenge rebel
Against the good man's name.
Ah! little do you know, sweet maid,
What art the city spoils,
Where villians ply the canting trade
and fraud is drest in smiles ». (1)

(1) «To a Country Girl», by H. H. Jr., which appeared in *Plough Boy*, an early American Agricultural paper published at Albany, N. Y. See vol. II, (1820-1821) p. 89, in the issue of August 19, 1920. The reference comes to me from Professor A. L. Demaree of Dartmouth College. He informs me that the poem is characteristic of a fear of the city which found frequent expression in the agricultural journals of that period.

After the big city had become an inescapable fact, a new literary evaluation of the urban community appeared. It was still negative; but it was much more sophisticated in tone. It took the form of a sentimentalized attitude toward farm life and, more practically, led to the growth of suburban communities. It has become a conventional theme of social history. In the poetry of our day which deals with social forces it is a somewhat constant theme:

«Of blood and dreams are built the towns of men;
Of bitter blood and lustful dreams of power,
And dreams of beauty». (1)

So the city develops a «soul» of its own and represents in itself the highest aspirations and the lowest degradations of mankind. In the grandiose and pretentious work of Oswald Spengler the megalopolis becomes an outstanding symptom of decline. In Spengler's view only civic man has a history. All great cultures are town cultures. The great city «marks the end of organic growth — the beginning of an inorganic, and therefore unrestrained, process of massing without limit». And this process is the last act for Oswald Spengler in the present version of the drama of humanity which plays itself through in long cycles of time. To Spengler the urban development represents an «organic growth leading to self-destruction». (2)

If we refuse to accept this view of the parasitic origin and nature of the city and prefer to follow the pathway to an understanding of the city which has been set by the modern city-planners and many of the sociologists, we may approach the megalopolis without prejudice, as a collectivity and a concentration point of human beings which has great economic and great social advantages, both for its individual units and for the totality which it represents. (3) Whatever end we may reach, a new inquiry into the city form and the social results of that growth seems to be warranted.

In the following consideration of the mental attitude of the ancient Greeks and Romans toward urbanism and its problems a number of primary postulates of this paper must be stated. The first is that the literature of Greco-Roman antiquity was aristocratic. The man of the people wrote but little. If he talked upon the street and found an audience, only occasionally did anyone bother to write down what he said to save it for the coming generations (4). Therefore the popular attitude toward urbanism, that of the actual man of the city streets, is to be seen only on pale reflections found in middle-class and upper-class literature. The second pre-supposition is that we must sharply distinguish the type of urban life which developed during the two millennia of the pre-Greek, oriental, cultures from that which we find in the Hellenic city-states. Cities unquestionably existed in the pre-Greek period, in the sense of large urban aggregations with the necessary political

(1) Hartley Alexander, *Odes on the Generation of Man* (New York, 1910), p. 68.

(2) Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the Western World*, vol. II, pp. 90, 95, 96, 100.

(3) See Robert M. Haig, *Toward an Understanding of the Metropolis*, in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* for 1926, p. 187.

(4) Three notable exceptions are the cases of Socrates, of Jesus of Nazareth, and of Epictetus, the former slave of Stoic faith.

organization and mechanism of defense which would be required to control the nomes in Egypt and lesser city kingdoms of the Babylonian area. (1) The differentiation of the pre-Hellenic cities from the Greek city form lay fundamentally in the sphere of political organization. Egyptian and Babylonian towns were completely dominated by the great palaces and temple structures around which they were built. (2) This royal and temple overshadowing was cultural and spiritual as well as political and visual architecturally. The Greek city-states, also, had their temples which were prominent elements of the architectural outlook of each city. But these temples were integral parts of the physical city and of the political community, dominated by the concept of the self-governing polity and subordinated to that idea. It was, in fact, the Agora, the market of place, and its activities, with a minimum of city-state regulation to hamper it, which was the directing center of the life of the Greek cities.

Economically, also, urban groupings of the pre-Hellenic period were confined to functions which were essentially rural, to the extractive and transportation activities connected with agricultural production. Even here the village peasants, the fellahin of Ancient Egypt, worked under the shadow of the Pharaoh (the Great House) or of the temple. Production in the handicrafts, buying and selling, management — all of those functions which the ancient Greeks and the modern world have attached, and still attach to the concept of civic life — were completely under monarchic or sacerdotal domination. (3) In the first half of the twelfth century before Christ, for example, as we know from the Papyrus Harris, the God Amon by royal grant was ruler of 169 towns situated in Nubia, in Egypt itself, and in Syria (4).

The ancient Greek attitude toward the urban centers of the Babylonian sector is clearly reflected in Aristotle's statement regarding the great capital, Babylon. To him it was not a city, but an agglomeration of people resembling the territory of a nation (5). Implicit in this statement is the idea that the areal spread of Babylon was so great that its inhabitants were semi-

(1) For Egypt see Edward Meyer, *Geschichte der Altertums*, 2d ed., (Berlin, 1909), I 2, p. 177. For Babylonia and the prefects of the Babylonian cities consult Bruno Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* I pp. 121, 128.

(2) Upon Dura - Europus on the Euphrates River and other similar Seleucid city foundations in the ancient Near East see M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, vol. I, pp. 479 and 490-492 (Oxford 1941). Upon the municipal spirit which remained alive in these cities of the Hellenistic period see vol. II p. 1075.

(3) M. I. Rostovtzeff in Richard T. Ely's *Urban Land Economics* (Ann Arbor, 1922), p. 57. For those economic functions which are considered to be essentially urban, consult Robert Haig, *Quart. Jour. of Economics*, 1926, p. 189.

(4) James H. Breasted in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, II, p. 182. Breasted's translation of the Papyrus Harris will be found in his *Ancient Records of Egypt*, IV, 85-206.

(5) Aristotle, *Politics*, III, 1, 12. No doubt Aristotle, who had not visited Babylon, followed the description in Herodotus I, 178 ff. Archaeological investigation has proven that Babylon, instead of being the 480 stades (about 55 miles) in circumference, or 14 miles on a side, was about 4 miles in length on each side. Even so it would have contained Corinth, which had a more extensive walled area than any other Greek city, about three times. For the walls of Corinth see Rhys Carpenter and Antoine Bon, *Corinth III*, part 2, p. 80 (Cambridge, Mass., 1936); and compare for Babylon, F. Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning* (1913), pp. 20, 26.

autarchic from the standpoint of food supply. Politically the Babylonian cities were not in the slightest degree self-ruling.

Wherever the lower limit may be set for that quantity of people which constitutes a city, in the modern terminology the number of the residents of any urban community always plays a part in the definition of the word «city» (1). This quantitative appraisal was completely absent from the «polis» concept of the Greeks who were the first people to develop a culture based upon city life in anything like the modern meaning of that term. Fundamentally polis was a political concept, meaning states; but the type of state represented in the word was unique. Within that polis which was state there was another polis -- a physical city. The physical polis was the heart of the territorial polis, that is, the state. Athens was a city and Athens was a state. Attica was a geographical area; but it was not a state. This symbolizes the essential differentiating characteristic of the Greek polis. It was physical city, plus state. Each microcosmic city-state made its pretentious and insistent claim to separate nationhood. This claim included recognition of its own set of its own set of laws, its separate coinage system, its own diplomatic service. The Greeks maintained for centuries this political philosophy of the little city-state; but the Italian cities lost it by 272 B.C., to the spread of Roman urban unification. Except for this concept of the city and state as one of the Greek and the Roman urban centers approached our cities of today in respect to their civic life and structure.

When did the polis of antiquity, this community of city type, first appear? I do not hesitate to put its inception even before the Greek colonization movement of the eighth century B.C. By this I mean to include both the urban aggregation into economic and social community, corresponding to the modern demands implied by the word «city», and the political concept of the city-plus-state which was so characteristically Greek (2). From the period of the eighth and seventh century colonization downward to the date of the establishment of Constantinople as the new Rome, the Mediterranean presented its typical and unchanging picture of a great inland sea whose edges were strung with towns and cities. Through these harbor cities the Mediterranean hinterlands sent out their products by ships to the utmost ends of that traders' sea. Similar towns and cities received these shipments and sent back goods of local production which were elsewhere desired or needed. This I take to be the outstanding fact of the ancient Greco-Roman culture, that it was fundamentally a culture of lands abutting upon the Mediterranean Sea and that it was thalassic-minded. Only two men really broke away from its

(1) The lower limit of resident population may be set, either legally or by general acceptance, at 2000, as in several of the countries of Europe and in some of the United States. Or it may be legally fixed at 10,000 or 12,000 as in other states of the North American Union. See the references collected by Scott E. W. Bedford in his *Readings in Urban Sociology* (New York, 1927), pp. 29-32.

(2) Victor Ehrenberg, in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, LVII (1937), pp. 147-159, has come to the same conclusion upon the polis as political concept, as against Helmut Berve in *Die Antike*, XII (1936), 1, f. Berve would put the realization of the political polis at about 500 B.C.

Professor C. W. Blegen, who is in charge of the revival of the Schliemann-Dorpfeld excavations upon the site of ancient Troy stated, in a lecture at the Metropolitan Museum in New York upon Nov. 5, 1938, that Troy was never a city. Throughout its career it remained a fortress surrounded by villages.

dominant intra-Mediterranean and thalassic viewpoint. These were Alexander the Great and Gaius Julius Caesar. Alexander broke down completely the political barriers between the Mediterranean and the Middle East as far as India. Against the opposition of the dominant party in the Roman Senate Julius Caesar cast aside that Mediterranean introvertism which constricted the imagination of most of the other leaders of his time.

The vital importance of a location on the shore of the sea was fully recognized alike by the theorists and by the practical politicians of antiquity. Plato in his *State of the Laws* would protect the administrative and central city of his state from the vices connected with harbor towns and their traffic. To do this he would locate the city about 80 stades distant from the sea. This is about ten miles (1). In 149 B.C. the importance of a ten mile distance from the coast was recognized both by the Roman Senate and by the Carthaginian state, when the Roman embassy, headed by the consul Censorinus, met with the envoys from the doomed city of Carthage. These envoys, whatever their grief may have been, gave over without protest the hostages demanded of them. They surrendered their war material, both naval and land equipment, including 2,000 catapults. But when Censorinus declared that they might keep their land and be autonomous, but must remove the city itself 10 miles back from the sea shore, their grief surpassed all bounds. Like men in the throes of death or men insane «they threw themselves upon the ground and beat it with their hands and heads», wailing and tearing their clothes. Suddenly complete silence gripped them all, a silence «as of dead men lying there». Even the hard-bitten Romans shed tears at this tragic sight. Well might the Carthaginians mourn for their city and their state, speaking to her «as to a woman who might hear», because 10 miles back from the sea meant the end of the might of Carthage. The Carthaginians knew it, and the Romans knew it (2).

The ideas which still dominate our thinking about urban development in antiquity were set in 1884 through an essay written by Robert Pöhlmann (3). His study was prepared and submitted in competition for a prize, with the given task of making «a collection, as complete as possible, of the facts relating to overpopulation, and particularly to the housing shortage in the great cities of antiquity» (4). Writing ad hoc and with the anti-urban preconceptions of his time, Pöhlmann had little difficulty in assembling information which proved to himself, and has set, for some part of the scholarly world since his time, a definite attitude. According to the Pöhlmann conviction, the urban populations of the Hellenistic and Roman periods were excessive; and, being excessive, the human aggregations in their urban communities were both exposed to, and productive of, the worst

(1) Plato, *Laws* IV, 704.

(2) For the vivid description of this scene see Appian, *Foreign Wars*, Libya 82. It goes back to the account of Polybius who was with Scipio Africanus when he carried the war to its bitter end in 147 and 146 B. C. To Strabo Rome was an inland city although it was located only 14 miles back from the sea ἐν ὄρεϊ τῆι μεσογαίᾳ, Strabo V 3, 7).

(3) Robert Pöhlmann, *Die Übervölkerung der antiken Grossstädte*, Leipzig, 1884.

(4) This is stated in Pöhlmann's work on the page facing the table of contents at the beginning of the essay.

sort of social discomfort and contamination (1). One of the less distinguished offspring of Pöhlmann's ideas was a hasty paper by Guilelmo Ferrero, still read and still quoted occasionally as authoritative. This article maintained that hyperurbanism in antiquity was one of the principal causes of the decline of ancient civilization (2). But Ferrero's paper failed to come to grips with the essential problems involved. Where was the line to be drawn between urbanism and excessive urbanism? If it were true that the cities were actually too large for a healthy social and state life, the real question becomes even more pressing. In what sense were the urban communities too large, and why so?

Size is a relative term like «time» and «space». The areal spread of a city, if it includes internal sustenance spaces, or even «breathing spaces», in the sense of public parks and gardens, is more important consideration than size in the sense of absolute numbers of inhabitants. More essential than either of these considerations is the question of the function of a city in relation to the life of its restricted locality or to the life of the wider area with which it is immediately involved, both economically and socially. This problem of city function is the one which has been most neglected in the treatment of urbanism in antiquity (3). If, however, we are to deal critically with the hyperurbanism of Pöhlmann an inquiry into the actual numerical size of typical ancient towns and cities cannot be avoided.

The scholar who attempts to deal with the size of the urban populations of Greco-Roman antiquity must fall back upon the approximations set up by Julius Beloch (4). The era of important urban development with which we are concerned covers the 800 years from the first Persian invasions of Greece to the accession of Constantine, called the Great. Within these eight hundred years two periods must be distinguished. The first is the stretch of 200 years from about 500 B.C. to Alexander's time, the «classical age» of Greek culture. The «great» cities of this time were not over-big; and the large ones which did exist were located, in general, in the eastern Mediterranean. In its western half the cities of any considerable size were confined to Carthage and its neighboring Punic towns and to the coast line of Sicily, lower Italy, lower Gaul and eastern Spain. Where city populations can be guessed at the big cities ranged from the 115,000 which may be ascribed to Athens and the Piraeus (5), to the 200,000 which is a possibility for the two

(1) *Ibid.* p. 8.

(2) Guilelmo Ferrero in *Hearst's Magazine*, XXI (1912), pp. 1723 ff.

(3) A beginning of the study of the economic functioning of the cities of antiquity has been made by M. I. Rostovtzeff — by types in his *Caravan Cities* (1932) — by essential connections in his article, Alexandria and Rhodes in *Klio* XXX (1937), pp. 70-76.

(4) Julius Beloch, *Bevölkerung der antiken Grossstädte*, Leipzig, 1886. The enduring value of Beloch's work arises from the candor and realism with which he acknowledged the limitations set upon numerical accuracy by the loss of the ancient data upon population numbers and his clear recognition of the fact that the margin of error in his calculations was very wide. See Beloch's study, *Die Volkszahl als Faktor und Grundmesser der historischen Entwicklung* in *Historische Zeitschrift*, CXI (1913), p. 324.

(5) Beloch, *Bevölkerung*, p. 101. A. W. Gomme, *Population of Athens*, p. 47, approaching the problem from a different angle from that of Beloch, gives the population of Athens and the Piraeus as about 155,000 in 430 B.C. and about 168,000 in 330 B.C. His figures are based upon the assumption that about one-third of the population of the entire state lived in the city area. It is my belief that he exaggerates the number of the slaves in the city proper.

Sicilian cities of Syracuse and Agrigentum (1). The typical cities ran from 20,000 to 100,000. Few, even of these, were backland towns. The large urban aggregations were all seaboard. As defined in terms of ancient transport, of city food supply and of public health and welfare, there is little reason to believe that cities of this time with the thalassic locations characteristic of Mediterranean urbanism, had outgrown the bounds of simple urbanism, or of optimum population, into the field of that vague social menace called hyperurbanization. Pöhlmann himself was quite aware of the moderate size of even the largest cities in the Greek classic age. Accepting this conclusion, he confined his discussion of overpopulation to the Hellenistic and Roman periods (2).

The period of the big cities of antiquity covers the six and one-half centuries extending from the death of Alexander to the end of Constantine's reign. The typical urban community, so far as population goes, falls within the limits of 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. The list includes a very large number of towns ranging about an estimated population of 20,000, such as Pompeii, or approximating 50,000 to 60,000, such as Italian Tarentum or Halicarnassus in Asia Minor (3). The number of cities which can definitely be placed within the population range of 100,000 to 200,000 is surprisingly small. It includes Pergamum, Rhodes and Jerusalem (4). Ephesus and Smyrna may have had as many as 225,000 inhabitants (5). The number of the real megalopolities which we can be sure of, if we rely upon Beloch's estimates is only five. These five of which the population range was from 300,000 to the 700,000 or 750,000 sometimes ascribed to Rome, were, in addition to Rome, Seleucia on the Tigris, estimated at 600,000. Antioch on the Orontes at 400,000 (6). Alexandria at somewhere near 500,000, and the possibility that Carthage, in the Roman imperial times, may have approached that number (7).

The conspicuous observations to be recorded from the Beloch estimates of urban populations are these:

In the long period of the acme of ancient urbanism five cities stood out which, within their time, were great population centers. Four of these — Seleucia, Antioch, Alexandria and Rome — were administrative centers of

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 281.

(2) Pöhlmann, *Überbevölkerung*, pp. 7-8.

(3) For Pompeii see Beloch, *Bevölkerung*, p. 480; for Tarentum and Halicarnassus, pp. 302, 227.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 227, 248 respectively. Possibly Tarsus falls in this population class, *ibid.*, p. 238. The information upon Pergamum derives from Galen, the well-known physician of the second century of our era, who was a native of the place. It is the most precise evidence which has come down to us regarding the population of any city of antiquity. The wide range of variation proposed by Beloch even for Pergamum will serve to warn the reader against accepting any of the figures of Beloch otherwise than as approximations toward the truth.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 231.

(6) Seleucia *ibid.*, p. 479. Beloch, p. 245, puts the free population of Antioch at 300,000. It is my own guess that the slave numbers would not be over 25% to 30% of the free persons which gives the total of 400,000 used above. See my rough estimate of proportions of slaves to free in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, XIV, p. 76.

(7) The Alexandrian estimate is given by Beloch in his *Bevölkerung*, p. 259. Roman Carthage is compared in size with Alexandria on p. 467.

great kingdoms or empires. In three cases definite explanations can be offered for the attainment of that big-city size which was normal under ancient conditions of trade, of transportation facilities and of food requirements. This normal size for megalopolies may roughly be put at about 300,000. Both Seleucia and Antioch lay upon the southern caravan route from the Aegean Sea and Egypt to middle Asia. In Ptolemaic times Alexandria became the outlet for the trade in aromatic plants used in the manufacture of incense and for other goods supplied by the east African coast and southwestern Arabia, to all Mediterranean markets. With these shipments went the large volume of surpluses of the handicraft production of Alexandria itself and of the busy towns of the Egyptian chora (1). The discovery of the constant direction of the monsoons, shifting from and toward India in six months periods, made the city founded by Alexander the Great at the western edge of the Delta the port of exchange for a large part of the goods between the two distant cultural and economic worlds of India and the Mediterranean. This importance of Alexandria was augmented by a comprehensive trade policy inaugurated by Augustus Caesar (2).

Briefly summarized the population of the three great centers, Seleucia, Antioch and Alexandria, were justified, in considerable degree, by their positions at nodal points upon very important trade routes. But it was the political function in the case of these cities which accounts for the population bloating beyond that conception of urban bigness which seems to be organically justified and typical during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The function of Carthage in the Roman period was almost wholly economic. The constant economic need of a city situated upon or near its side is sufficiently proven by the modern population of Tunis, its present counterpart, which was given in the census of 1936 as 219,578 (3).

(1) M. J. Rostovtzeff, 'Zur Geschichte des Ost und Südhandels' in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* IV, 298-315, and his more general discussion in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, VII 134-135. Ulrich Wilcken's publication of a bottomry loan made in Egypt upon the incense trade of the Red Sea shows how widespread the participation in this business was in the Mediterranean world in the second century B.C. See *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, LX (1925), 89 ff.

(2) M. L. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* (1924), pp. 27-30; H. Idris Bell in *Cambridge Ancient History*, X, pp. 306-307. The admirable location of Alexandria and the farsightedness of Alexander in its selection explains the continuity of its historical function as economic center. In 1840, at a low ebb of its importance, its population was estimated at 60,000 inhabitants (Malte-Brun and Balbi, *System of Universal Geography*, Edinburgh, 1844, p. 823). Its present population is given at about 1,000,000 in 1949. The *World Almanac* for 1928, p. 620, put the number of its residents at 573,000.

I have wondered if Ernest Kornemann could substantiate from ancient sources his reference to Alexandria, made in *Raccolta di Scritti in Onore di Giacomo Lombroso* (Milan, 1925), p. 245, as 'the hated Greek city on the sea'. A fragment of Polybius quoted by Strabo, XVII 1, 12, C 797, states that Polybius, when he visited Alexandria, developed a feeling of loathing for the city. The quotation does indicate that he felt an active dislike for its mongrel population. Except in the Christian Fathers, in their anger at 'the harlot city' which clung to its pagan worship, I fail to find any real feeling of hatred for the place. A large collection of the ancient and modern references to Alexandria will be found in A. Calderini's *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell' Egitto Greco-Romano* (Cairo, 1935), I, pp. 55-206. The attitude of the Christian writers appears on p. 180.

(3) *Whitaker's Almanac*, 1948, p. 893. Even at a low ebb of population, about 1840, under the blight of nominal Turkish rule and before the common use of steam transportation, the population of Tunis was estimated at about 100,000. See Malte-Brun and Balbi, *Universal Geography*, p. 828.

Ancient Rome is the city which, above all others, has been the source of our modern exaggerated views of over-population in the world of Greco-Roman antiquity; and it was completely atypical. Never did it have, after the Punic Wars, any economic function commensurate with its numerical greatness (1). It was an overgrown city of homes, a consumer of goods, the military and bureaucratic center of a great empire (2).

The three ancient megalopolies which owed their size solely, or predominantly, to political function — Seleucia, Antioch, Rome — were further untypical in that they are all non-thalassic. The extraordinary size of the other two — Alexandria and Carthage — is economically explicable. The outstanding fact of ancient urban history is that mesopolities were the rule, not the tremendous human agglomerations which we associate with the term hyperurbanism. I would therefore urge that a renewed study of city and rural district in antiquity be started, without starting from the presupposition that an economic imbalance between the country populations and the size of cities was necessarily atypical feature of ancient society.

On this basis the question may now be put: — What was the feeling which appears in the ancient literature regarding the countryside and country people as contrasted with the urban populations? Otherwise stated, was the «rural bias» which the sociologists of our day still feel constrained to combat, actually prevalent in Greco-Roman antiquity? From the political point of view there was little reason for the development of this sentiment under the Greek conception of the city states. For, in the city states, the citizen privileges of office holding, of voting and of fighting for the state were held on the tribal theory that citizenship was heritable (3). Citizenship was in no sense dependent on geographic distribution. The voting booths for the elective and legislative activities of the direct assembly were, it is true, in the city proper; but aside from the handicap of his greater distance from the center of political activities, the farmers of the three plains of Attica and the charcoal-burners of the hills had complete equality of voting with any city-dweller. In the period of the independent Greek city-states one a priori consideration arising from the economic character of Greek life operated strongly against the development of a class struggle based upon country life against city life. This lay in the restriction of the right of land ownership to members of the citizen body and in the limited opportunities for capital investment. These facts set a premium upon investment in farm lands. Because citizenship, and with it the right to own landed properties, was an accident of birth which might befall a poor man as it might a rich man, the money interests of the wealthy citizen of urban residence were never completely divorced from those of the land-owning and land-working poor man of the countryside if he were of citizen status. In the history of Rome's development, after

(1) Beloch, *Historische Zeitschrift*, CXI (1913), p. 335.

(2) See the commendable study upon *Industry and Commerce of the City of Rome* by Helen J. Loane, Baltimore, 1938. Covering in her book the period of Rome's greatest size and highest power from 50 B.C. to 200 A.D., Miss Loane has supplied the detailed information for the general conclusion already reached by Beloch that Rome was not a manufacturing city in any sense comparable to its size.

(3) After 451 B.C. in the Attic state the inheritance of citizen rights was confined to those of full Athenian blood both from the father and the mother.

200 B.C., into an Empire with dominions overseas the famous latifundia of Italy and the provinces certainly destroyed this healthy balance. But the big landowners of the Roman world never completely identified themselves with big-city life to the point of complete abandonment of their rural contacts. The conflict which they represented was that of the oppression of little farmers by big farmers. The latifundists had their city homes, it is true. But also they maintained rural homes upon their estates; and the feeling was not prevalent in antiquity that the countryside and the small farming folk were being exploited by the classes of urban dwellers with industrial and banking interests which differentiated them as essentially city people.

In Greek literature the first phase of anti-urban expression, that of dismay and fear of a change obviously destructive to the then existing social forms, had passed before 600 B.C. If this early and naive reaction to city life were anywhere to be found it should be in Hesiod's poems. I find no trace of it. His world was one of injustice done to the hardworking and the honest. The petty princes of his time were bribe swallows and their decisions were crooked (1); but there was no distinction between townsman and rustic in respect to the suffering which their crooked counsels caused.

In the literature of the Greek city-state period little support is to be found for any anti-urban feeling prevalent in the countryside. Even when Thucydides gives his unforgettable description of the ravages of the plague at Athens he does not blame the cities themselves as breeders of disease. The epidemic struck Athens most severely and, elsewhere, it affected the most populous places. As for Athens, the crowding of the people of the countryside into the city, was a direct result of the war plan of Pericles; and it served to aggravate, only, the misery which originally the plague alone had caused. In the funeral oration delivered by Pericles in the year 431 B.C., as it comes to us from the pen of Thucydides, the sacrifice of those who died was made for the polis as state, not for the urban residents of Athens. The yearly sacrifices and games which were provided to refresh the citizens from their labors were those of the countryside as well as those of the city of Athens (2). In the spirit of this great speech «polis» always means the state. Nowhere does the city alone, as urban center, appear as distinct from the state. In fact the physical city itself, Athens, receives no mention in the entire oration. Pride in the state and the advantages which it brought to its citizen members had no local limitation either to the asty (the walled city) or to its rural territory. The distinguished French scholar Maurice Croiset has maintained that the comedies of Aristophanes catered to a feeling of hostility held by the citizens from the rural districts against the city of Athens and the leaders whom the city admired (3). The caricatures of the democratic favorites in the comedies, in Croiset's judgment, represent the revenge which

(1) E.g., Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 260-264.

(2) Thucydides, II 38. See the article of W. S. Ferguson, "The Salaminiot of the Heptaphylian and Sounion", *Hesperia*, VII (1938), pp. 45, 71. The maintenance of the group organizations and spirit of the old village and other local units into the fourth century, as exhibited in the history of the *gene* of the Sounians and the Salaminiotians, must have done much to satisfy the local feeling within the state.

(3) M. Croiset: *Aristophane et les partis à Athènes* (Paris, 1906), pp. 6-11.

the ruralite took upon these demagogues. Upon closer analysis this interpretation of the old comedy, as representing a hatred of the simple Attic countryside against the war mongering and the sophisticated ways of the Athenians of the city, does not hold (1).

« Divine Nature gave us the fields, human art built the towns ». So says Varro in the book which he wrote with the intent of proving the economic and social value of farming, and of enticing the Italians of his day from absentee landlordism back to farming under personal management. This is a contrast between nature and art, rural scene and city — not a value judgment upon the societal advantages of country life and city life. The assumption is commonly made that Greek and Latin literature is full of the contrast of the simplicity and health of country life as opposed to the sophistication and social distempers of urban living. Or the idea may be reversed. City life produced a type which felt itself, in its greater sophistication, superior to the country man, the boor. In the extensive literature of antiquity which deals with primitivism (2) there is surprisingly little mention of that urban life which is the outstanding feature of Greco-Roman culture skirting the Mediterranean. To the primitivists human society had, indeed, degenerated progressively in its passage from the idealized simplicity of the early days of mankind to the days of earth's « gradual tabescence », to quote from the talented and thoughtful Lucretius (3). It was luxury which had degraded mankind. But this luxury of living is not connected specifically with urban life. No more is its opposite, the degradation caused by poverty, connected with rural life alone.

The « blameless Ethiopians » (4) were not holy and pious because they lived in the simplicity of rural surroundings. Nicolaus of Damascus indeed, distinctly places them in towns with streets (5). In fact the entire literature of primitivism shows a surprising indifference to the setting of its primitives, whether in cities or in country surroundings. The blessed people of the Sun-state of Iambulus lived in the fields in separate groups which did not run over four hundred (6). The Essenes, a small group which lived in a communal society in Palestine at the time of Jesus, avoided city life because of its lack of discipline and the contamination of character unavoidably connected with urban living (7). But the Hypoboreans of Diodorus lived in cities (8). The fabled ideal land of Meropis contained two immense cities

(1) See A. W. Gomme's article, Aristophanes and Politics in *Classical Review*, I, II (1938), p. 98. In *Acharnians*, 33, Dicaeopolis looks out upon the fields, hating the city and longing for his own deme. But he is a farmer, long cooped up in a crowded city with nothing to do. This is merely the desire for his own life and his own work in a man torn up by the roots through the exigencies of war.

(2) The ideas of the ancient primitivists have been conveniently presented and discussed by A. O. Lovejoy and George Boas in their *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, Baltimore, 1935.

(3) Lucretius, *de Rerum Natura* II, 1162.

(4) Homer, *Iliad* I, 423.

(5) Nicolaus Damascenus in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* XLIV 25 (45 in Meineke's edition).

(6) Diodorus, *Siculus* II, 55-60.

(7) Philo, *Quod omnis probus* XI, 49.

(8) Diodorus, *Siculus* XI, 15.

of 2,000,000 inhabitants each (1); and Lucian wrote a parody upon the Isles of the Blest in which the central unit is a great city of gold with a wall of emerald (2). The Germans, as their forthrightness is compared by Tacitus with the sophisticated mores of the degenerate Italians, lived in villages of disconnected houses — not in cities (3). Nowhere, however, does Tacitus imply that the absence of urban life among them was a cause of their moral superiority.

The Romans of the Republic — at least as represented by Cicero — were more clear than the Greeks in distinguishing between physical city — *urbs* — and the city as political entity — the *res publica*. If the Roman Senate, says Cicero, had taken away from Capua its magistrates, its senate and its public assembly, it would have cut out the nervous system which is the dynamic part of the political unit called a *res publica*. Only an *urbs* would remain (4). To paraphrase Cicero's meaning, a *res publica* has a nervous system, namely, its political machinery. An *urbs* has it not.

What depth of feeling between urbanites in the Roman period and men of the small towns does this actually represent? How deeply did the small-town man resent the city? Horace may serve us as a type. A townee of humble origin, he received his education in the big city. For this boon he was grateful (5). Always there clung to him an undoubted love for the restfulness of the small town. The wish that his old age may be lived at pleasant Tibur is genuine enough (6). A simple man whom simple things pleased, nevertheless Rome was to him the « regal » city, however much empty Tibur and unwarlike Tarentum pleased him (7). His feeling for the country is that of the weary sophisticated who has spent years in the crowded city and appreciates the restfulness of small-town life. He may talk of the « madness of the city (8) »; but the growth of cities is, nevertheless, to Horace one of the factors in the forward movement of man from primitivism to cultured living (9). It was the molding hand of dire poverty which made the Roman heroes of the old days the men that they were. It was not country life *per se* (10).

It is the literature of the early Empire which set the fashion of painting the life of the big city in distressing colors, with its many discomforts for the poor and the envy aroused in the literary hangers-on of the rich by their vulgar exhibitions of « conspicuous waste » on the part of the financially fortunate.

In a speech delivered in the Senate in 44 B.C. Cicero illuminated for us, in one of those flashes of light which are rare in antiquity, the feeling of a

(1) See the fragment of Theopompus in Jacoby: *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* II B, p. 551.

(2) Lucian, *True Histories*, II, 4-16.

(3) Tacitus, *Germania*, 16.

(4) Cicero, *de lege agraria*, II, 32, sections 88, 90 and particularly in section 91, *nervis urbis omnibus exseciis*.

(5) Horace, *Satires* I 6, 71-78.

(6) Horace, *Odes* II 6, 5-8.

(7) Horace, *Epistles* I 7, 44-45.

(8) *Rabiem. . . . civicam* in *Odes* III 24.

(9) Horace, *Satires* I 3, 104-106.

(10) Horace, *Odes* I 12, 41-44.

man like Marcus Antonius, Roman born and descended from one of the old leading political families, for the politicians who hailed from the municipalities of Italy. « You see » — Cicero is speaking to the Senate — « how all of us are despised who are from the municipalities. That means all of us, obviously » (1). Without doubt there was some feeling of superiority in this limited group, which Marcus Antonius represented, over the sons of the municipalities. This scorn Cicero, mentally alert as he was (2), skillfully turned against his clumsier opponent.

During the early days of his consulship in 63 B.C. Cicero waged successfully before the Roman people fight against a crooked bill called the Rullan Land Proposal (3). Though he was fundamentally honest in his opposition to the Rullan Bill, it would be too naive of us to take Cicero's arguments against the bill at their face value. He was hitting straight from the shoulder not necessarily talking straight from the heart. He was a Roman politician; and Roman politicians were not exactly ingenuous. He urged his Roman hearers not to be wheedled into supporting a bill for land assignments which were agriculturally sterile and situated in an unhealthy locality. When he contrasted the advantages they already enjoyed through their urban life in Rome he was calling upon arguments which certainly would appeal to his Roman listeners. « So far as you are concerned, Romans, if you wish to listen to my advice, keep that possession which you have — of gracious living, of freedom, of the suffrage, of favoured position, of the city, of the forum, of the games, of festival days, and your other advantages. Do this — unless perhaps you prefer to renounce all these things and the glamor of the fatherland to be installed under Rullus' leadership in the arid territory of Sipontum or in the pestilential area of Salpini » (4).

Such were the advantages of life in the city of Rome, or the sources of advantages which could be enumerated in appeal to those inhabitants who were of its lowest citizen stratum.

From the literature of one period, the early Empire, and from a literature which dealt with one city, we have derived that picture of ancient urban life which dominates the vibrant pages of Pöhlmann's *Urbervölkessung* and, in his wake, has colored most of the present writing about urbanism in antiquity. The period was that covered by the Roman rule of the Claudian and Flavian dynasties. The city was Rome, the most crowded and the least typical city in the entire circuit of Mediterranean lands. The outstanding writers in this genre are three — Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Martial, and Juvenal. The first two were townsmen from Spain who lived most of their productive lives in Rome. Juvenal may have been Roman born, from the most crowded of its

(1) Cicero, *Philippic* III 6, 15. Compare Cicero, *pro Publio Sulla* 7, 22 where he says that he was accused of being the third «foreign king» of Rome.

(2) Note how skillfully, again in *Philippic* III 6, 15, he uses a simple statement of fact to the detriment of Antony. Antony had stated that the mother of Octavianus Caesar was from the town of Aricia. Cicero twists this innocent remark into an intentional insult.

(3) For an interesting analysis of the Rullan Land Proposal see M. D. Rostovtzeff, «Some Roman Problems», in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Sept. 26, 1925.

(4) Cicero, *De lege agraria* II 71-72.

streets, the Subura (1). Of the three, the poet Juvenal made his living as an exponent of the straight satire. The other poet - Martial - had made his reputation by turning the Greek epigram into a Latin polemic-satiric form. These two were hangers-on of the artificial life of the imperial court and its satellites. This was a society which harbored nostalgic memories of the days when to be a Roman resident in Rome still meant freedom to say what one might wish to say. The earliest of the three, Seneca, was a political figure of stoic faith, who, without converting himself or anybody else, was grieved about sin (2). If one desires to read realistic descriptions of ancient city life one may find them in a photographic mime of Theocritus or in the names of Herondas, who was utterly, without any feeling of modesty and utterly without moralistic inhibitions. Their pictures are credible; but those of the Roman satirists are not. It was the profession of the satirists to caricature; and the stencils which they used were fairly constant and unchanging.

The famous third satire of Juvenal is the classic source of most of the anti-urban diatribe. What was it that the supposed city-haters complained of? Of «the thousand perils of the cruel city», of its fires and the constant threat of falling houses, and of the poets who gave matinees in August (3). Of the necessity for bluff and display if one was to get onward (4). There is no living to be made by honest skill in any calling in the city (5). But there is a living to be made by a pleader of cases in Gaul or Africa; and Juvenal's disgusted Roman urges the lawyer to go there (6). In Rome, rent, food and clothing are high (7). The expenditure required for clothing at Rome, where one must dress well is much higher, for example, than in Martial's birthplace in Spain where one toga will last you through four autumns (7). The apartments of Rome are many storied and the poor man must live up under the roof where the cooing pigeons lay their eggs (9). The height of the houses is a matter of constant complaint to Juvenal and Martial; but the architect Vitruvius extols the increase in building height at Rome as a sensible method of furnishing excellent living quarters for an increasing urban population (10). Pöhlmann preferred to follow the whimsies or the complaints of the satirists (11). In my judgment it was Vitruvius, the technician and master-builder, who could better evaluate the population problem of the city and better assess the soundness of its solution.

(1) Gilbert Highet in *Trans. of the American Phil. Assoc.* LXVIII (1937) p. 489, note 54.

(2) See the analysis of Seneca's character, as displayed in his writings, by Rudolf von Delius, *Zur Psychologie der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Munich 1911) pp. 15-19.

(3) Juvenal, *Satires* III, 7-9. The matter of the falling houses is a literary convention of Juvenal. Cf. *Satires* II, 194. For Martial's satirization of the clique at matinees see his *Epigrams* VI 48; X 10.

(4) Juvenal, *Satires* II, 105-138.

(5) *Ibid.* III, 21-24. Cf. the poor living earned by teachers at Rome, *ibid.* VII 142, 215 ff. — except by the music teachers of rich men's sons, *ibid.* 175-177.

(6) *Ibid.* 147-149.

(7) Martial X 96; Juvenal III 166.

(8) Martial X 96, 12.

(9) Juvenal III 199 ff.

(10) Vitruvius, *de architectura* II 17. His phrase is: *populus Romanus egregias habet sine impeditione habitationes*. Cf. Aelius Aristides, *Encomium Romae* Or. XIV, section 199, where the admiration for the «skyscraper» solution at Rome is evident.

(11) Pöhlmann, *Überbevölkerung*, p. 90.

Shall we accept or reject an hypothesis emanating from the fertile and brilliant mind of Rostovtzeff which seeks to explain the military and social crisis of the middle of the third century? It runs to this effect (1). At the end of the second century the urban dwellers ceased to appear as recruits in the army (2). The army rosters were now filled with peasants of a lower cultural niveau, recruited in peripheral provinces — Spain, the Gauls, Britain, the Danubian provinces and inner Anatolia (3). These former serfs and *coloni* hated and wished to destroy the cities, because the cities harbored as their residents the leading classes, the senators and equestrian ranks and the bourgeoisie upon which the imperial power was based (4).

This is a brilliant attempt to resolve a situation for which no other more adequate explanation had, as yet, been offered. A priori it runs counter to the findings of this study which would eliminate from the ancient literature, in large part at least, that city-hatred which customarily has been predicated as characteristic of the ancient social order. The sources used by the great scholar, Rostovtzeff, to substantiate the theory are of an earlier or of a later date (5); and it is doubtful that they will establish, even for their own time, any considerable depth of anti-urban feeling. Against the theory it is possible to enter new materials for the period 200 to 300 A.D., deriving, it is true, from Palestine and Egypt. These data serve to emphasize anew an old conviction, that fiscal pressure from the federal authority of the Empire had gradually spread upward until it covered, with a single blanket of economic wretchedness, the peasants of the countryside and villages, the townes, and the formerly privileged classes of the cities.

The measure which, in the end, enacted in legislative concentration the equalizing of economic oppression was the Constitution of Caracalla (*Constitutio Antoniniana*) of 212 A.D. By Caracalla's decree most of the free inhabitants of the metropoleis and villages throughout the Empire became Roman citizens. This resulted in these places in the establishment of Councils, selected by compulsory appointment from the ranks of the local well-to-do. Privileges and social advantages which had once adhered only to the Bouleutai (the Council Members) of these larger cities which had municipal autonomy were now widely spread to town and country people of the same, or of lower, economic standing. This extension of privileges sounds well. What it really meant, however, was the equalization of town and city classes with classes of the countryside under an increasingly burdensome personal domination. Specifically it meant that the well-to-do of the small towns, now forced into the Councils, were responsible collectively and individually for an amount of taxes from their town or village district which was previously fixed. The

(1) Rostovtzeff's idea was first developed in the *Musée. Belge XXVII* (1923) pp. 233-242 and is incorporated in his *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, pp. 443-448 with the data given in notes 63-68 to ch. XI on pp. 627-628.

(2) *Musée. Belge XXVII* p. 239.

(3) *Ibidem*.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241; *Soc. and Econ. History of Rome* p. 443 f.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 628 note 7, Rostovtzeff relies solely upon Libanius *de patrocinius* (or XLVII) which is actually a letter written to the Emperor Theodosius sometimes between 388 and 393 A.D. In the text, p. 446 he mentions also Dio Chrysostom in this connection. The one is much too late, the other much too early, to serve as adequate witness to events in the cities of the middle section of the third century.

pleasant social distinctions of the Councillors had long since turned into heavy, financial burdens.

From the middle of the third century and from the town of Arsinoe in Egypt we now have a fragmentary court record of a case argued on appeal before the Roman prefect Aurelius Appius Sabinus (1). To relieve their own distress the Senators of Arsinoe had attempted to dump a part of their tax obligations to the state upon some peasants by compelling them to undertake certain of the magistracies of the town. Counsel for the peasants introduced in evidence a law promulgated by Septimius Severus which forbade impressment of villagers for metropolitan offices with their liturgical burdens (2). The advocate for the side of the senators, addressing the Prefect, then introduced a most illuminating rejoinder: "The laws are worthy of respect and reverence. But you must judge by giving heed to (the decision of) the Prefects who have had regard for the needs of the city. It is the need of the city which limits the strength of the law" (3).

At a time for which the theory presented by Rostovtzeff would establish a hatred on the part of the countryside so strong that peasant armies sought to destroy the cities, we find that the urban communities and the countryside were united in fact, in a common misery recognized by both sides. It is only a little later that Rabbi Johanan of Tiberias in Palestine gave this advice to men threatened with appointment to the Senates of towns and cities: "If they have mentioned you among the [members of the] Senate, the Jordan shall be thy neighbor" (4). That means: "In such case flee to the Jordan".

Who could put the equalized wretchedness of city man and peasant of the villages and country with better knowledge, or more succinctly, than did the Prefect of Egypt in the trial mentioned above, over which he presided at Arsinoe? The argument was presented that the Emperor Septimius Severus had passed the law protecting the peasants from impressment for fiscal obligations at a time when the cities were prosperous. To this the Prefect remarked: "The argument based upon prosperity, or the decline of prosperity, is equally valid for the villages and the cities" (5).

(1) The shattered and difficult document, London Papyrus Inventory 2565, was admirably published by T. C. Skeat and E. P. Wegener in the *Journ. of Egyptian Archaeology* XXI (1935) pp. 224-247. Brief references and interpretations of the document will be found in *Chronique d'Egypte*, 1938, pp. 359-361 by H. Idris Bell; and by Paul Koschaker in *Zeitschrift der Savignystiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Rom. Abt.*, LXVIII (1938) p. 358, note 2.

(2) P. Lond. Inv. 2565, lines 82-83 in *Journ. Egypt. Arch.* XXI p. 232.

(3) *Ibid.* lines 85-87.

(4) Palestinian Talmud, Moed Katan II 81 b. Rabbi Johanan died in 270 A.D. I am indebted to my friend Professor Salo Baron for this reference.

(5) Literally translated his words were: "The argument of prosperity, or of the change from prosperity". P. Lond. Inv. 2565, lines 99-102, in *Journ. Egypt. Arch.* XXI p. 232.