

footnotes

1. On this latter point, some writers seem to feel that to discuss critically, the activities and ideologies of individual Jews, or of particular groups of Jews, is by definition anti-Semitism. I hold no such view and feel that critical analyses of Black-Jewish relations in the United States is a legitimate focus for scholarly investigation.

2. A critical review of the Cruse literature, combined with an attempt to refute Cruse and his book on a number of different levels is Ernest Kaiser's, "The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual," *Freedomways*, Vol. 9 (Winter, 1969), 24-41. Another recent and inadequate attempt to confront Cruse is Robert Chrisman, "The Crisis of Harold Cruse," *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 1 (November, 1969), 77-84.

a reply

Some of Bracey's comments are well-taken and reflect either overstatements or elliptical comments by me. Bracey is correct to note that the stagnation of southern agriculture contributed to the industrialization of Negroes. However, I was referring to those who remained behind and did not migrate until after 1940. Those who came after 1940 found an even more industrialized city which had a diminishing need for unskilled labor than did their predecessors of the 1900 to 1930 period. The stagnation of agriculture did not itself force people off the land. Rather the attraction of wages in the cities, the reorganization of agriculture under the AAA, and the mechanization of agriculture after 1940 lured or forced people off. Bracey is also correct to cite the numerous accounts of the social and educational background of pre-World War I Black intellectuals. I meant that we need an analysis of why such backgrounds predisposed them to emphasize certain political as opposed to social and economic issues.

On the whole, however, I believe that my analysis of Cruse's elitism is sound and that I have a greater appreciation for his work than Bracey states. I note that Cruse provides much needed information about the tensions in Black and, partly, in White America from 1915 to the present. Cruse dealt provocatively with the left and with Black intellectuals and requires his readers to reevaluate much of twentieth-century cultural history. But because Cruse chose to combine historical exposition with "cultural" prescription he creates a variety of problems. Most importantly, does his projected criticism bias his historical account? For example, if the intellectuals of the 1920's misunderstood the cultural interests of the majority of Harlemites and the ethnic nature of American social life, does that accurately account for their dilemmas or does it explain why intellectuals have dilemmas today? Moreover, is it true that Negro intellectuals have some abiding relationship to the "masses" that must only be "understood" for them to assert leadership, that the "masses" have not changed and produced leaders of their own, and that American social structure has changed and thus so have our social conflicts? Such questions can only be answered if we have an historically-sound cultural analysis of Black life, of its impact upon White Americans, and vice versa. I regret that Bracey did not pick up on what seems to me the crucial problem in a book which is both historical and prescriptive.

I should now like to examine some of Bracey's comments in turn. First of all, I was not trying to rebut Cruse's use of class versus "ethnic forces" but arguing that Cruse *had* avoided formal definitions of class and explained American tensions better than the sociologists and historians that I cited. I maintain, however, that Cruse underestimates the devolution of ethnicity. The 1970 census indicates that more people live in suburbs than in the cities, and one cannot find in the suburbs ethnic neighborhoods anything like the unique cultural enclaves that existed in central cities. Politicians may conspicuously eat pizza and bagels but they spend more time at meetings of chambers of commerce, labor unions, shopping centers and factories. Furthermore, young Whites are not searching for a new "ethnicity" but a new religion and their identification with eastern religion or with Blacks is more than an expression of cultural needs.

Secondly, although I am hardly a radical I am not trying to continue the Cold War. Indeed, on first reading *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* I found it so bitter a denunciation of the Communist Party that I believed it a Cold War tract. Nor was I trying to cast political aspersions on Cruse by tracing his thoughts to their Marxist origins. I was arguing that, while Cruse rejected Marxism as a system for analyzing American society, he nevertheless allowed his early reading of Marx and Lenin to shape his interpretation of our foreign policy. Nor was I trying to defend our foreign policy. I merely noted that any government acts to protect what it conceives to be its interests and that we should not be surprised when our government acts to control

oil in the Middle East or iron in Venezuela. I noted, though, that in many instances the protection of private property was not the cause of aggressive use of American power abroad. Aggression and "imperialism" are not synonymous, and our foreign policy has far more complex roots than merely the attempt to achieve the "highest stage of capitalism."

Cruse's prescriptions for intellectuals as a vanguard seem to me another reflection of his Leninist intellectual predilections and marks his work not as radical but as elitist. I know also that folk culture is not produced by intellectuals. But Cruse suggests a necessary relationship between writers and playwrights and the folk whereby the spirit of the latter is used by the former to mobilize Blacks and radicalize American consciousness. I wonder first whether the intellectuals Cruse analyzes could ever have played such a role, even if they had wanted to, given the rapid development of new artforms in America since 1920. I suggest that new international artforms like the film and television have rendered national artforms virtually obsolete. While Bracey is correct to note that Cruse mentions the film, Cruse deals with it not as an artform but as a propaganda device. I suggest two counter-developments: first, that the rise of film and television has produced numerous local centers—notably Watts—to challenge Harlem; but, second, that the international origins of the film and television diversify the culture of the vast audience and take us even further away from a world in which folk origins and ethnic conflicts have meaning. If racial conflicts remain, I suggest that they are part of an international phenomena and that culturally America is losing its "national" character.

Finally, I was not wandering aimlessly through a summary of elitism in Black thought. I noted that leadership elites have varied and that specific elites had specific strengths and weaknesses. Since Cruse was so prescriptive he should take account of the limitations of specific elites. My last sentence implies, I hope, that radical views of American culture are needed to challenge the conservative influence of behaviorist social science that now dominates academic disciplines. Cruse's work raises just such challenges. The vestigial remains of Marxist social science, however, bias his interpretation of American culture and create false hopes about the radical potential of literary intellectuals.

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