



Quelle

Vaughan, Robert: *The age of great cities* (1843)¹

Our age is preeminently the age of great cities. Babylon and Thebes, Carthage and Rome, were great cities, but the world has never been so covered with cities as at the present time. [...] [p. 1]

Yes, cities, and their resources, must soon become, in a greater degree than ever, the acknowledged wealth and power of nations. [...] The feudal temper, which rested its dominion upon the sword, is giving place to the spirit of a civilization which aims at dominion by means of intelligence, industry, order, law, and liberty. [p. 90]

[...] It was as much a part of the purpose of the Creator with regard to man, that he should build towns, as that he should till the land. If the history of cities, and of their influence on their respective territories, be deducted from the history of humanity, the narrative remaining would be [...] of no very attractive description. In such case, the kind of picture which human society must everywhere have presented, would be such as we see in the condition, from the earliest time, of the wandering hordes of Mongolians and Tartars, spread over the vast flats of central Asia. [...] [pp. 101-102]

Man is constituted to realize his destiny from his association with man, more than from any contact with places. The great agency in calling forth his capabilities [...] is that of his fellows. The picturesque [...] may be with the country, but the intellectual, generally speaking, must be with the town. [...] Every living thing [...] has its appointed development; and in the discipline, expansion, and force of the human faculties, as realized in the civic associations of mankind, we see the development which has been manifestly assigned to human nature. In such relations, the aptitudes of the human mind are placed under due culture, and man is assisted in making his nearest approach toward the fullest use of his capabilities. [...] [pp. 102-106]

Every intelligent person must have observed, that apart from any technical or direct means of instruction, there is much in the nearer, the more constant, and the more varied association, into which men are brought by means of great cities, which tends necessarily to impart greater knowledge, acuteness, and power to the mind, than would have been realized by the same persons if placed in the comparative isolation of a rural parish. [...] [p. 146]

Cities [...] are the natural centers of association. Of course the advantages derived from association are there realized in an eminent degree. Men live there in the nearest neighborhood. Their faculties, in place of becoming dull from inaction, are constantly sharpened by collision. They have their prejudices, but all are likely to be assailed. Manufactures, commerce, politics, religion, all become subjects of discussion. [...] It may be the lot of very few to possess much vigor of thought, but each man stimulates his fellow, and the result is greater intelligence. The shop, the factory, or the marketplace; the local association, the newsroom, or the religious meeting, all facilitate this invigorating contact of mind with mind. The more ignorant come into constant intercourse with the more knowing. Stationariness of thought is hardly possible, and if its movements are not always wise, the errors of today are as lessons of experience for tomorrow. Such, indeed, is often the astuteness acquired in the exercise of this greatest of free schools, that the smith of Sheffield, or the weaver of Manchester, would frequently prove, on any common ground, more than a match for many a college graduate. [...] [p. 152]

In towns there are [also] greater facilities than in the country for conducting education in its more direct and technical form. These facilities are greater in towns, partly on account of their greater wealth, and their greater freedom from prejudice; and partly in consequence of their more

¹ Vaughan, Robert, *The age of great cities. Or modern Society viewed in its relation to intelligence, morals, and religion*, London 1843, S. 1, 90, 101-106, 146, 152-153, 254-255, 296-298.

general sympathy with popular improvement, and their comparative freedom from the [...] control of powerful individuals or classes. Towns are not like villages, subject, it may be, to the oversight and guidance of a single family, or of a single clergyman. They possess greater means and greater liberty, and, in general, a stronger disposition to use both in favor of education, even in behalf of the children of the poorest. [...] [p. 153]

It is ascertained as the effect, even of the most elementary instruction, that in proportion as it reaches the people at large, it diminishes crime, creates a power of self-government, and demonstrates to the great majority brought under its influence, that the rogue's arithmetic is based on false principle, that as such it must always lead to false results, and the most expedient course of action, even in the case of the selfish, is that, which, by conducing to character, conduces to power. Thus the man who is placed in possession of a new power to do wrong, is placed under the influence of new motives to do right. [...] [pp. 254-255]

If large towns may be regarded as giving shelter and maturity to some of the worst forms of depravity, it must not be forgotten that to such towns, almost entirely, society is indebted for that higher tone of moral feeling by which vice is in so great measure discountenanced, and for those voluntary combinations of the virtuous in the cause of purity, humanity, and general improvement, which hold so conspicuous a place in our social history. It is not only true that from cities good laws, liberal arts, and letters have in the main their origin but no less true that spontaneous efforts in the cause of public morals, and in the aid of the necessitous, made in such manner as to embrace voluntary association, and large sacrifice of time, thought, and property, are found almost exclusively among citizens.

The feudal noble, the village esquire, and the rural incumbent, may be moral and humane persons, and their influence may be highly favorable to the morality and comfort of the circle about them. But the permanent and costly institutions designed to act as means of abating the physical and moral evils of great cities, owe their origin, and nearly the whole of their support, to the people of the cities in which they make their appearance.

Our conclusions on this subject, therefore, will not be just, except as we place in one view with the evils which are generated by the state of society in large towns, the good also which only that condition of society is found competent to call into existence. The immorality of large towns [...] may be very lamentable, but the influence opposed to it will be seen to be of vast amount. The provisions which are thus made against the ignorance, the vice, and the miseries of society are so manifold, that it would require large space to explain their nature, and be tedious even to enumerate them. The oversight of this spontaneous benevolence extends to the suppression or discountenance of vice in almost every form, to the restoration of multitudes who have become its victims, to the need of the sick, the sorrows of the bereft, the condition of the homeless and the perishing, and even to the protection of the animal creation against the cruelties often inflicted upon them by the hand of man. These are among the good fruits of great cities, and they are fruits found nowhere else in such abundance, or in such maturity. [pp. 296-298]

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Auf diese Quelle bezieht sich ein einführender und erläuternder Essay von Lees, Andrew, *Städtewachstum und die Kraft der Assoziation: Robert Vaughan – Ein Klassiker der europäischen Stadtgeschichte* im zuvor genannten Sammelband, S. 31-34.