

3.6.4 Tore Nordenstam, Bergen, Norway

1. Places

Where do I go to concentrate? In the first instance, to my office in the university. In the evenings, to my office at home (not ready yet, so I don't use it very much, but I sometimes sit down to reflect and smoke a cigar). Before having children, I often went to the university office when it was absolutely quiet – on evenings, on Saturdays and Sundays, on holidays. It is important for me not to be interrupted when I do something important. It is also important for me sometimes to go for walks, alone of course, along the sea or in the mountains surrounding the city where I live. Evening walks are also helpful, but I rarely take them nowadays because of my two small children. Walking around in market places and department stores is also helpful sometimes, as long as I have no shopping to do or any other practical needs to be taken care of en route.

In the autumn and winter, I use the university office more; in springtime and summer, I use nature more, and the office to solidify the results of my walks. It is absolutely impossible for me to do important work surrounded by other people – e. g., working in a library. Solitude is best.

Since we are in the middle of the autumn now, I choose to describe my office as a work place. One thing I like about it is that I am the only person to have used it. It is quiet and at the turn of a U-shaped corridor. The faculty building is on the top of a hill. There is a marvellous view of the sea, the ships coming and going and an island behind. The building is surrounded by some older buildings in lovely yellow colour. I have arranged the office according to my own needs and taste. Books on the walls, most of my philosophical library here – some fifteen-hundred altogether. Also a number of paintings: an abstract one, by a painter from the city where I live; a Sudanese print reminding me of my years in Africa; some small reproductions of paintings by Mondrian; some other reproductions and cuttings. On the sofa table is a very big tray, made from clay, housing cigar-boxes, matches, sandwiches, fruit and a thermos filled with coffee. Coffee is essential to work! The walls of the office are grey-olive. They were a bit strange to begin with, but now after ten years I have got used to them and find the room calm. This office has been my stability point in the

turmoils of the last ten years, during which I first settled down with my family, bought a villa, got separated, divorced and married again. Altogether, I have lived in some six different places in the past ten years. I have spent considerable time getting the office in order: installing books and bookshelves, pictures, arranging manuscripts according to a certain system, and so on. I can work very fast when necessary in this place. In the beginning the smell of the place was a bit strange. Now I have used it for so long that I have put my own imprint on it, smoking cigars, etc.

2. Horizons and Creativity

In doing my work, I find a certain rhythm stimulating: working with a few colleagues on joint projects in Bergen, then going to Stockholm to work with another group on different but not totally unrelated themes. Going away for a few days every now and then can be very stimulating. Also I find a certain daily rhythm valuable. I have never liked long periods of work followed by long holidays. Instead, I prefer to work intensely for some three-five hours per day, then relax, listening to music, cooking, looking after the children, walking or cycling. I get irritated if I am not permitted to work alone, immediately after having got up in the morning. I like to do practical things after work, beginning at about two or three in the afternoon. I love going away for some days to the Continent, on a conference or some similar event, then coming back to write something. A background of stable family life is also necessary for my work, as I realized during the years when my first marriage broke up and I couldn't work creatively at all.

On the average, I am away for some days every month. At present my rhythm is quite stable when I am at home: getting up between half past eight and nine in the morning, taking my two-year old daughter to the kindergarten, working in my office, giving lectures, etc. Some time between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, I collect my daughter, prepare dinner, eat, sleep for say half an hour, then take care of my daughter and the baby for another two or three hours. Then evening tea, perhaps music, newspapers – not much time to read books at the present – and bed around midnight.

The alternation between stability of this kind and the unplan-

ned activities when travelling is very stimulating indeed.

3.6.5 Wolfgang Hartke, München, West Germany

With these questions one should perhaps make a distinction whether the answer has to be different in the present moment (that is e. g., at seventy years of age, emeritus, etc.) than earlier, or if the answer throughout as a rule will be the same. It would be fully thinkable that the respondent today in retrospect thinks differently about a situation, interprets it differently than the reality was earlier in the moment of the event.

There certainly exist definite places which I seek and also sought earlier in order to concentrate, for example, when completing some important work.

To be alone is important, to be sure. But to me that is a need only at an advanced stage of a project when the really creative moment is over and the problem solved. On the other hand, I know colleagues who put on gramophone, radio or even the television – just as we see young people do these days – in order to concentrate on their mental work. I catch myself frequently partaking in conversation with an imagined partner, listening to his objections and answering them. In this reverie I am often walking in a large room, sometimes speaking French, not my native German.

I remember exactly that during creative moments of my life thoughts reappear when I enter similar situations as before. For example, in similar localities something like this: Oh dear, I know this place, I was here when we spoke about this or that. I have even today an exceptionally good memory of places. When I come to a known place for a second time and not know exactly if I have been there before or not, it is enough to turn around and look at the place from the same direction as the first time. Simultaneously all associations are present to me and I can continue conversations which have been interrupted there long ago.

To be alone is sometimes not so important for the beginning of concentration as a certain rather complex environment. When a thought must ripen or a decision must be taken I sometimes go to the busy city, even into a café or restaurant and start a conversation with some person who looks interesting. Even play with children or animals can inspire me. Or a view of attractive land-