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THE NEXT STEP

THERE are two arguments against enthroned self-interest. One is that in the long run it doesn't work. The other is that human beings are not really self-fulfilled until they feel themselves animated by the Promethean spirit of service. The first argument is pragmatic, the second metaphysical, growing out of the idea that humans are by nature that portion of the universe which, having reached self-consciousness, became responsible for its beneficent functions. On this view, humans are the caretakers of the world, a role which, finding it burdensome, they gave to the highest representatives of the species, whom they had elevated to the status of gods. Conforming to after determining the will of the gods then became the duty of humans. The gods, through various arrangements, were our ancestors from whom, however ambiguous and confusing, our instructions come.

We may regard this as practically unbelievable, yet anthropologists now agree more or less with Marshall Sahlins who, as one of their number, put the matter briefly in *Culture and Practical Reason:* "So far as I know, we are the only people who think themselves risen from savages; everyone else believes they descend from gods."

Why is this idea so completely alien to us? As good an answer as any was given by Nietzsche in his careless phrase, "God is dead!" meaning, as he later explained, we have abolished the true world, and since our world is the true world's imperfect reflection, it too is being abolished. How is it abolished? By becoming what we call "value-free," which is a way of declaring it meaningless. In *Human Nature and the Human Condition,* Joseph Wood Krutch summed up the cultural result:

> Today the prevailing opinion among even the moderately intelligent and instructed is based largely upon their understanding and misunderstanding of Darwin, of Marx, of Freud, and more especially, of the popular expositors. From the teaching of these masters they conclude: (1) that man is an animal; (2) that animals originated mechanically as the result of a mechanical or chemical accident; (3) that "the struggle for existence" and "natural selection" have made man the kind of animal he is; (4) that once he became man, his evolving social institutions gave him his wants, convictions, and standards of value; and (5) that his consciousness is not the self-awareness of a unified, autonomous *persona* but only a secondary phenomenon which half reveals and half conceals a psychic nature partly determined by society, partly by the experiences and traumas to which his organism has been exposed.

This view of our origins has a practical effect on how we regard ourselves. Krutch continues:

> Thus though man has never before been so complacent about what he *has*, or so confident of his ability to *do* whatever he sets his mind upon, it is at the same time true that he never before accepted so low an estimate of what he is. That same scientific method which enabled him to create his wealth and to unleash the power he wields, has, he believes, enabled biology and psychology to explain him away—or at least to explain away whatever used to seem unique or even in any way mysterious. . . . Truly he is, for all his wealth and power, poor in spirit.
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> Sometimes he so far forgets himself as to talk wildly about the need to "control our destiny" and about the prospect that we shall soon be able to do so. What he seems to forget is that "control" implies some defined end, a movement toward some fixed point in the direction of which he wishes to move. But that is what the dominant relativism cannot supply.

It is little wonder, then, that self-interest was adopted as the motive power of our lives, the stimulus and stir behind our daily activities, the glue that holds together our organizations of various sorts—from country club to the national state. Why, then, raise any question at all about this driving principle, sanctified for businessmen

by Adam Smith as the producer of the wealth of nations, made the basis of animal instinct by Darwin and the biologists, and given the tone of "culture" by hedonist philosophers? Because, as Mr. Krutch concludes:

> Even most of those who are neither Christian nor, in ordinary sense, mystical, do nevertheless feel that there is something lacking in our society and that this lack is not generally acknowledged; do feel that, for all its prosperity and for all its kindliness, generosity, and good will, it is somehow shallow and vulgar, that the vulgarity is superficially evidenced in the tawdriness, the lack of dignity and permanence in the material surroundings of our lives, and more importantly in our aims and standards, that we lack any sense that efficient and equitable systems of production and distribution are only a beginning, as, for that matter, are also our ideal of democracy and our struggle for social justice. You may, as a few do, attribute that alienation to a lack of religion." But perhaps even that term is not broad enough. It is a lack of any sense of what life is *for* beyond comfort and security, and it would still be so even if all these good things were conferred upon all. At best life would still remain, in Yeats' phrase, "an immense preparation for something which never happens."

The book we have been quoting was published in 1959. Since then the indications of dissatisfaction Krutch noted have grown in dimension and insistence. The level of criticism has heightened, starting with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), followed by dozens of volumes concerned with what the rage for acquisition has done to the world around us. Our disgust for ourselves is matched by the anguish of a mutilated nature. And in *Science* for March 10, 1967, Lynn White, jr., wrote: "With the population explosion, the carcinoma of planless urbanism, the now geologic deposits of sewage and garbage, surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order." The ecological indictment and evidence mounted to become a chorus of indignation and appeal, while the call to humans to assume a larger responsibility—accept man's promethean role—was explicit in the work of a microbiologist, Catherine Roberts, who said (in *Science, Animals. and Evolution,* 1980):

> Man's conscious awareness of his conscience, the divine ethic, and his self-transcendence as a realizable human potential *does* set *Homo sapiens* apart from other creatures. And precisely because of his spiritual uniqueness, he has a responsibility to help lower beings to ascend that exceeds any responsibility to them based on a sense of physical relation through common descent. . . . In assuming the existence of a spiritual hierarchy of being, there at once emerges an idea wholly undemocratic and, at the same time, wholly necessary for the evolutionary ascent: *noblesse oblige.* This is no illusory concept to bolster the human ego. . . . In the religious scheme of things, the higher are ever helping the lower to realize potentiality for the sake of the cosmic good.

Mrs. Roberts is right, if still a minority voice. The idea of man as a cosmic benefactor, even a cosmic manager, does involve hierarchical relations with the rest of nature and life, and this assumption brings us squarely in opposition with the great discovery and cause of the eighteenth century—Equality. Yet there is nonetheless a resolution of this difficulty, which she also names—*noblesse oblige.* The eighteenth-century revolution probably would never have taken place—or would have been very different in character—if there had been more *noblesse oblige* practiced by the upper classes. We don't exploit our children—at least we try not to—partly because they are in so many ways at our mercy, and partly because we love them and often want them to grow up to be better or even wiser than we are. If we begin to think of the less privileged races and classes as younger members of the great human family, we might bring our behavior in line with hierarchical law as it applies to us, if we become conscious of this principle and deliberate in following its rule.

The trouble with equality at the cultural level—it is a moral necessity at the political level, for reasons the Founding Fathers made clear—is that it discourages striving for excellence and settles for the lowest common denominator. Such equality becomes the equality of an atomistic society, where all the units are alike because equally unimaginative, equally mediocre, equally passive and malleable. Where would the

American Revolution have been without a galaxy of distinguished individuals, starting with Paine, Washington, Jefferson, and Adams? And if you read their lives you find that, whatever their individual tastes and differences, they were all committed to *noblesse oblige.* They may have had money, but they didn't work for money in their service to their country. They worked for vision and principle. Pick any period of history especially worth remembering, whether Periclean Athens or Elizabethan England, and you will find a similar collection of remarkable men and women for whom *noblesse oblige* was a natural inclination. Then, in more or less our own time, although starting with transcendentalist figures like Thoreau and Emerson, there is the company described by Paul Brooks in *Speaking for Nature* (Sierra Club, 1980)—dozens of men to whom self-interest seemed an absolute stranger, who worked all their lives in behalf of the community of life. Nature. like human life, is filled with inequalities. Nature resolves these difficulties—if they are difficulties—with the numerous miracles of symbiosis, the web of interdependent function. Among humans, the solvent is love—a love for other humans and the surrounding life, transcending temporary and partisan attachments.

It is no accident that the best human beings of our time have turned to the wisdom implicit in ecological science for inspiration and guidance. Krutch, who joined this fraternity as a devoted—and accomplished—amateur, wrote in an essay, "Conservation Is Not Enough," published in the *American Scholar* for the Summer of 1954:

> Hardly more than two generations ago, Americans first woke up to the fact that their land was not inexhaustible. Every year since then, more and more has been said, and at least a little more has been done, about "conserving resources," "rational use," and about such reconstruction as seemed possible. Scientists have studied the problem, public works have been undertaken, laws passed. Yet everybody knows that the using up still goes on, perhaps not so fast nor so recklessly as once it did, but still at a steady pace. And there is nowhere that it goes on more nakedly, more persistently, or with a fuller realization of what is happening than in the desert regions where the margin to be used up is narrower.
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> First, more and more cattle were set to grazing and overgrazing land from which the scanty rainfall now ran off even more rapidly than before. Then more outrageously, large areas of desert shrub were uprooted to plant cotton and other crops which were watered by wells tapping underground pools of water, now demonstrably shrinking fast because they represent years of accumulation which can be exhausted even more rapidly than an oil well. Everyone knows that this water supply will give out before long—very soon in fact, if the number of wells which draw on it continues to increase as it has been increasing. Soon dust bowls will be where was once a sparse but healthy desert; and man having uprooted, slaughtered, or driven away everything which lived healthily and normally there, will himself either abandon the country or die.
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> To the question of why men will do or are permitted to do such things, there are many replies. Some speak of population pressures, while others more bluntly discuss unconquerable human greed. Some despair; some hope that more education and more public works will, in the long run, prove effective. But is there, perhaps, something more, something different, which is indispensable? Is there some missing link in the chain of education, law and public works? Is there something lacking without which none of these is sufficient?

One begins to suspect what Mr. Krutch has in mind—a deep and realizing sense of *noblesse oblige.* For its expression he goes to Aldo Leopold, the forester and conservationist who wrote *A Sand County Almanac* to record his feelings and observations of the natural world, and to declare that "missing link" in its concluding chapter, "The Land Ethic." Krutch's appreciation of it is too good to omit here. He said:

> This is a subtle and original essay, full of ideas never so clearly expressed before, and seminal in the sense that each might easily grow into a separate treatise. Yet the conclusion reached can be simply stated. Something *is* lacking; and because of that lack, education, law and public work fail to accomplish what they hope to accomplish. Without it, the highminded impulse to educate, to legislate and to manage becomes as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. And the thing which is missing is love, some

> feeling for, as well as some understanding of, the inclusive community of rocks and soils, plants and animals, of which we are a part.

The gist of Leopold's contention is that enlightened self-interest is not enough—it is not *good* enough. As Krutch puts it briefly: "The wisest, the most enlightened, the most remotely long-seeing exploitation of resources is not enough, for the simple reason that the whole concept of exploitation is so false and so limited that in the end it will defeat itself and the earth will have been plundered, no matter how scientifically and farseeingly the plundering has been done."

This call to become lovers of the earth, we might note, is itself irenical, not compulsive. A compelled love, for us, does not, cannot, exist. Love is spontaneous, springing from the roots of our being. Either we feel it or we don't. Yet there are stories aplenty of how people learn to love, of the strange ways in which people come to feel the bond of affection. The love of poor and unhappy people began for Jane Addams in watching a bull fight in Madrid. Henry George's lifelong fight against poverty began with his seeing the misery in an American city on a cold winter's day. No planned curriculum will teach people to love, although certain kinds of exposure seem to make a contribution. Both beauty and ugliness have their effect.

In 1894 a child was lost in the forest near Hampshire in England. Who was the child? He was Richard St. Barbe Baker, and this little boy lost fell in love with the trees. As Paul Hanley, who lives in Saskatchewan, where St. Barbe went to school, has said in the current *Structurist:*

> For nine decades the child will grow in his affinity for trees; their fate will be entwined with his own. He will mobilize people on every continent to plant and protect trees; he will awaken thousands to the oneness of humanity and all living things, and to the healing of the earth. He will be the Man of the Trees.

Let us have no more talk of self-interest as the only spring of action in human beings. There are dozens, scores, hundreds of accounts of human beings who found in themselves another reason for living—working and living. We may be long in recognizing, with Aldo Leopold and some others, that self-interest does not work, but learning this will be assisted by the discovery that all through the years of the exploitation of nature, another way of relating to the earth, to our fellows, to all forms of life, has been put into practice by the few. What has been done by the few can also be done by the many. We are all equal in this possibility, however our skills may vary. In fact, this very variability may prove a blessing to the world, since there are so many different things to do.

We should however return directly to the subject of love since from all accounts this is the heart of the matter. It has consideration in Wendell Berry's essay, "People, Land, and Community," in which he says:

> We can commit ourselves fully to anything—a place, a discipline, a life's work, a child, a family, a community, a faith, a friend—only in the same poverty of knowledge, the same ignorance of result, the same self-subordination, the same final forsaking of other possibilities. If we must make these so final commitments without sufficient information, then what *can* inform our decisions?
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> In spite of the obvious dangers of the word, we must say first that love can inform them. This, of course, though probably necessary, is not safe. What parent, faced with a child who is in love and going to get married, has not been filled with mistrust and fear—and justly so. We who were lovers before we were parents know what a fraudulent justifier love can be. We know that people stay married for different reasons than those for which they get married and that the later reasons will have to be discovered. Which, of course, is not to say that the later reasons may not confirm the earlier ones; it is to say only that the earlier ones must wait for confirmation.
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> But our decisions can also be informed—our loves both limited and strengthened—by those patterns of value and restraint, principle and expectation, memory, familiarity, and understanding, that, inwardly, add up to *character* and, outwardly, to *culture.* Because of these patterns, and only because

> of them, we are not alone in the bewilderments of the human condition and human love, but have the company and comfort of the best of our kind, living and dead. These patterns constitute a knowledge far different from the kind I have been talking about. It is a kind of knowledge that includes information, but is never the same information. Indeed, if we study the paramount documents of our culture we will see that this second kind of knowledge invariably implies, and often explicitly imposes, limits upon the first kind: some possibilities must not be explored; some things must not be learned. If we want to get safely home, there are certain seductive songs we must not turn aside for, some sacred things we must not meddle with. . . .

Self-interest is of course an almost omnipresent factor in human behavior, but only one of a number of factors. Held to its natural function, it takes care of our biological requirements and our material needs. It works for good when limited to these areas, just as, for example, pain works in delivering warnings that something in our physical lives is amiss and needs correction. Other factors may take charge of the intellectual and moral ranges of our being, including our activities as teachers and administrators—really two closely related departments in our role of users of social intelligence.

Our mix of motives works well so long as we understand their function, but it produces only confusion and paradox when we do not distinguish between them. And when we allow self-interest full authority over every aspect of our lives—which means in relation to others and to the natural world—we introduce forces leading to disharmony and malfunction of the sort now becoming apparent. Recognizing this may be the lesson of the twentieth century, and possibly the next major step in human evolution.

REVIEW
THEATER, TELEVISION, MOVIES

THROUGH the years, we have kept wondering how television might be put to good use; being spontaneously skeptical, we have read many of the critical analyses of the medium, remembering especially Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* and Neil Postman's *The Disappearance of Childhood* with a certain satisfaction, but also asking if there remains some possibility of an undiscovered value. Our conclusion was, perhaps so, but not now. Television is an electronic means of reaching a mass audience—called the global village by Marshall McLuhan. But it is also a business, and a business, in our time, is a way to make money. You can't do television unless you make money out of it because it costs so much to produce. That usually reduces its educational value to less than zero. If there is a choice to be made between teaching and manipulating, the best that can be hoped for is a compromise, and we know what that means when the survival of the business is at stake.

Presently there are two strikes against television. Education is not a business, despite the efforts of the National Manufacturers Association to make it operate like one. And Theater, of which television is a slightly legitimate form, is not a business. As Harold Clurman, for many years a leading dramatic critic, declared long ago, explaining why the theatre "is sick unto death"—"There may be nothing wrong with business, but—I am ready to shout it from the housetops—it is not the business of theatre to be a business!" Going on, he said:

> There is a very simple reason why the theatre is not and cannot be a business. The reason is: that it is an art. . . .This goes for the writing of novels, the painting of pictures, the making of music, but the theatre is the place where the opposite temptations are most readily at hand, and where the hard path appears to lead most rapidly to a kind of non-existence.

Where is the television producer ready to promise nonexistence to his sponsor?

If there should ever come a time when artists are free to make television programs without the constraints of a bottom-line accountant's watchful eye, something good might result—meanwhile, for us, it is a lost cause.

What about the movies? Movies are supposed to make money, too, yet now and then there is a very good film. But the making of movies seldom seems to be in the hands of artists. What grown person, now, is unable to look back on films seen in his childhood and realize how his imaginative images of a great story he has read—what the people and things were like—are taken from him by the complete literalism of a film? Surely any planned experience which makes the spectator into a passive, absorbent sponge is the opposite of art, the reverse of education. Even entertainment calls for at least a small contribution from those who enjoy it.

Questions about the possible merit of movies recall a long article by David Denby (in the January *Atlantic*) in praise of film at the expense of theater. The writer is a movie critic for *New York* magazine and once wrote reviews for the *Atlantic*. In this article (of fourteen pages) he is boastfully partisan, happy to explain the grounds of his prejudice.

> I'm a movie critic—how can I hate the theater? It's almost unnatural. But every time I go, proud of my attention to duty, I feel awful. Something is wrong: I don't seem to be getting it—the *experience*, the "electricity," the "irreplaceable presence of the live actor," that so many others love and need. The "distinguished" plays and musicals I've dragged myself to in recent years seemed clichéd, obvious, crude, or else intricate and clever in ways I didn't care about. They certainly "held the stage"—they held it by main force. But that shrewdness about theatrical craft had little to do with art, or at least little that I could see, and I resented the play's grip on me. I missed the cinema's loose inclusiveness, the variety of life going on. . . .
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> Movies, a dreamlike experience in the dark, appeal to "everyone," but especially to the solitary

> person, the loner, . . . also the teenager, who generally feels misunderstood and out of it. . . . Theater, on the other hand, appeals to the social-minded, the positive and explicit people who make this country go, and the tone of the theater, all too often, is didactic and public-spirited. Pessimism, even nihilism, is certainly possible in the theater, but such a mood would be so explicit that it would constitute an *issue.* In the theater almost everything must be spelled out, but in a movie the most powerful meanings may emerge principally from the atmosphere, the relation of characters to the world, and that is why a cynical, violent Clint Eastwood movie is hip in a way that a pessimistic and "challenging" Broadway play cannot be.

In this article there is no pretense at doing justice to the theater, but only more than justice to the films. Actually, the theater needs no defense since it is only bad theater that Denby is complaining about, and toward the end of his discussion he waxes eloquent in praise of certain plays. Meanwhile he says things about film that are worth thinking about. For example:

> . . . what I'm trying to get at is the basic *uneasiness* that some of us feel in the theater, and I think some of our pain may derive from an unacknowledged notion of the proper relation of representation to metaphor and symbol. In the movies if you turn on the camera, you can photograph trees, or city streets, or the grimy stacks of a steel mill, and all these things are blessedly free of any extra significance. Representing nothing more than themselves, they have a weight and beauty that is almost moral. The solidity of the physical world in a film can be immensely moving: the rain, the streets, the smokestacks, give off a kind of hum—not an actual sound, of course, but a sensation as palpable as the rustling of woods on a summer night. That sensation is the knowledge, both thrilling and heartbreaking, that the world exists, that a thing in the world is itself and not another thing. . . . For a movie-goer, the theater is often an experience of sensory deprivation. There they are, the actors and the empty stage and the goddamn chairs! There's nothing else to look at, and it's all so murderously *significant.* Unless a genius like Beckett has written the play, and has used the meagerness of the spectacle as a way of evoking life's flirtation with nullity, the pretension of the bare stage is unendurable.

Despite the lucidity of Mr. Denby's prose and the relevance of what he says about the movies—rather, about *cinema*—we shall quote no more from him but turn to some criticism at another level, written forty-nine years ago by Walter Benjamin. In his posthumous book, *Illuminations* (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, edited by Hannah Arendt), in an essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," first published in 1936, Benjamin suggests that "what withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art."

> One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. . .

Eventually, Benjamin gets to the movies, saying:

> The artistic performance of a stage actor is definitely presented to the public by the actor in person; that of the screen actor, however, is presented by the camera, with a twofold consequence. The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually changes its position with respect to the performance. The sequence of positional views which the editor composes from the material supplied him constitutes the completed film. . . . Also, the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to his audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. . . . The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. . . .
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> Experts have long recognized that in the film "the greatest effects are almost always obtained by 'acting' as little as possible. . . ." Let us assume that an actor is supposed to be startled by a knock at the door. If his reaction is not satisfactory, the director can resort to an expedient: when the actor happens to be at the studio again he has a shot fired behind him

> without his being forewarned of it. The frightened reaction can be shot now and be cut into the screen version. . . .
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> Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed.

Benjamin regarded the movies as an art of distraction.

> Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.

Most of these comments Mr. Denby would probably regard as irrelevant, and for him they doubtless are. Yet they indicate elements in the formation of the modern mind and the limitation on its responses. What, then, would be the right use of the mass media? Surely, something very different from the use we make of them now.

COMMENTARY
THE BEST BARGAIN

THE mention at the end of this week's Frontiers of the MANAS pamphlet by Carlos Fuentes, *High Noon in Latin America,* makes it pertinent to draw attention to an article by Fuentes which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* for March 10. The distinguished Mexican novelist and diplomat strongly recommends that the United States take seriously the initiative for peace and cooperation proposed by the Contadora nations for Central America, which has already been found acceptable by the government of Nicaragua. Mr. Fuentes says:

> The Contadora nations are not Marxist-Leninist states, nor are they manipulated by the Soviet Union. They are proved friends of the United States. Their initiative is the product of President Miguel de la Madrid of Mexico, Nicolas Ardito Barletta of Panama, Belisario Betancur of Columbia, and Jaime Lusinchi of Venezuela. . . . Their agreement offers the nations in the region, including the United States, all the security guarantees they wish for.

He asks whether the policy of the United States will change for the better, or continue as it has in the past, reciting from undisputed history:

> Perhaps no other nation in this hemisphere—not Mexico, not Cuba—has been so consistently abused by the United States, from the usurpation of the country by the American adventurer William Walker in 1855 to the overthrow of President Jose Santos Zelaya by the Taft Administration in 1909, to the occupation by the Marines from 1913 to 1933, to the signing of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty in 1916 that turned Nicaragua into an American protectorate, to the murder of Cesar Augusto Sandino and the installation of the Somoza dynasty, a dictatorship nurtured and protected by Washington for more than 40 years.

The best bargain, Fuentes says, would be for the U.S. "to give something up—its Central American raj—and gain the friendship, nonalignment, economic partnership and political respect of five nearby nations."

For better understanding of these nations, the MANAS pamphlet, *High Noon in Latin America* by Mr. Fuentes, his address at Harvard in 1983, would be good reading. We published this pamphlet in both English and Spanish last year, and copies are still available—$1.00 each, with substantial discounts on quantity purchases.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
RECOLLECTION AND STORIES

IN *Resurgence* for last September/October, the editors introduce an article by Sigmund Kvaloy by saying he is a "storyteller, farmer, traveller, and academic." What drew us to quote him is a comparison of generations in Norway, which was, he says, "industrialized very late compared to the rest of Europe." The process of industrialization "cut people up into functions that were once unified in a single individual and handed out the pieces to a thousand career specialists." The result has been to make life *"complicated* instead of complex." He goes on:

> I'll use my childhood to illustrate this. I lived on a Norwegian mountain valley farm. Contrast this with a glimpse into a present-day situation: it's my son who has gone to bed in an apartment in modern Oslo. When a child goes to bed all the impressions of the day are digested. The only time when there is peace for that, is in bed, before sleep comes. When I look back I have a lot of fabulous memories of the room in the old log house where every single piece of timber had been individually shaped and I knew whom among my own relatives had done it. I knew where in the forest they had cut the timber, spots I could visit myself and still see the stumps. We didn't have electricity and we were not to use candles or oil lamps unnecessarily, so in my room I just had natural twilight which was different every night and my experience and impressions of play and work were new every day. Every night there would be something new with me to give life to all those fantastic visual patterns that surrounded me on the walls and ceiling, the natural patterns in the wood, always impressing on the mind the rhythms of living growth. They inspired adventure stories that grew incessantly in my mind, bridging waking existence and dreams.
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> The situation today is different. Look at my son's room which is a "bed and media chamber." On the surface it looks colorful; closer scrutiny reveals it as an expression of the mass production of IGS [Industrial Growth Society]. We have a Buddha here, pointing to "spiritual values" and a "cosmopolitan attitude," a Buddha printed in four million copies on washable glossy plastic, made in Tokyo. Every item in the room is expressive of the standardization and commercialization of the world of this growing child. There is nothing here that challenges him to be self-creative, to use his own hands and senses in direct interplay with the naturally complex material and spiritual world.

Well, Kvaloy became a rocket engineer, which seemed the closest thing to the ancient magic his ancestors believed in, but after blowing one through the roof of the barn he decided to study philosophy. Finally he wound up as a member of a group called The Ecopolitical Ring of Cooperative Action which now has members around the world. In the beginning—

> That first autumn we lacked practice and training, so we called on top experts of the Norwegian IGS to come every week to our meetings and be informative, but what they did not know was that their primary function was to act as our training objects. That was our laboratory. I am stressing it, because it proved very successful. At each "laboratory session" they were one and we were many, which meant that we dared to confront them and make mistakes without losing our nerve. Not only did we pick up courage this way, we discovered their one vulnerable spot, they were specialists, meaning they could be beaten by generalists. They were extremely good within their own narrow field, knowing next to nothing outside that field. The world is full of such people. We are governed by people who don't know where we are heading. So we built our own training program to become *super-amateurs,* meaning people who both know a little within all relevant social and ecological fields, who love their work and who put all their effort and talent into learning that work. The *main* trick of "super-amateurship" is the training to combine logically and understandably across the specialists' fields and to tie all that to the main theme that interests people.

This is only a smattering of a very long article. (*Resurgence* is at Worthyvale Manor Farm, Camelford, Cornwall, PL 32 9TT U.K., single copies a pound.)

A good storyteller is Barry Lopez, who in last December's *Harper's* begins by writing about a wolverine and ends by proposing what a national literature should be. In the middle he tells what he means by a story, which seems just right. He says:

> I think of two landscapes—one outside the self, the other within. The external landscape is the one we see—not only the line and color of the land and its shading at different times of the day, but also its plants and animals in season, its weather, geology, the record of its climate and evolution. . . .
>
> The second landscape I think of is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape. Relationships in the exterior landscape include those that are named and discernible, such as the nitrogen cycle, or a vertical sequence of Ordovician limestone, and others that are uncodified and ineffable, such as winter light falling on a particular kind of granite, or the effect of humidity on the frequency of a blackpoll warbler's burst of song. . . . Similarly, the speculations, intuitions, and formal ideas we refer to as "mind" are a set of relationships in the interior landscape with purpose and order; some of these are obvious, many impenetrably subtle. The shape and character of these relationships in a person's thinking, I believe, are deeply influenced by where on this earth a person goes, what one touches, the patterns one observes in nature—the intricate history of one's life in the land, even a life in the city, where wind, the chirp of birds, the line of a falling leaf, are known. These thoughts are arranged, further, according to the thread of one's moral intellectual, and spiritual development.

As part of his explanation of story Barry Lope' speaks of the Navaho, one of many native peoples who regard the land as revealing a sacred order. The Navaho have a ceremony called Beautyway, partly, Lopez says, "a spiritual invocation of the order of the exterior universe, that irreducible, holy complexity that manifests itself as all things changing through time. . . ."

> The purpose of this invocation is to recreate in the individual who is the subject of the Beautyway ceremony that same order, to make the individual again a reflection of the myriad enduring relationships of the landscape.
>
> I believe story functions in a similar way. The purpose of story-telling is to achieve harmony between the two landscapes, to use all the elements—syntax, mood, figures of speech—in a harmonious way to reproduce the harmony of the land in the individual's interior. Inherent in the story is the power to reorder a state of psychological confusion through contact with the pervasive truth of those relationships we call the land.

This is a fresh way of thinking about "education"—the native people's way of practicing *Paideia.* Not many Indians have been able to keep it going, although the Hopi have, and some others, as the Navaho. It will take us time to discover what we have lost in the passing of the vital life of our native peoples. John Collier and Benjamin Lee Whorf have shown different means of understanding our impoverishment, if not how to recover what was destroyed. With all our talk of "moral education," we have yet to take seriously this spontaneous pantheism of the earth, this unnamed wisdom of giving the young the balance of nature for the beginning of their lives.

The impoverishment would be much greater without writers like Barry Lopez who feel their way to the living reality in archaic meanings. Then, as he says:

> These thoughts, of course, are susceptible to interpretation. I am convinced, however, that these observations can be applied to the kind of prose we call nonfiction as well as to traditional narrative forms such as the novel and the short story, and to some poems. Distinctions between fiction and nonfiction are sometimes obscured by arguments over what constitutes "the truth." In the aboriginal literature I am familiar with, the first distinction made among narratives is to separate the authentic from the inauthentic. Myth, which we tend to regard as fictitious or "merely metaphorical," is as authentic, as real, as the story of a wolverine in a man's lap . . . The power of narrative to nurture and heal, to repair a spirit in disarray, rests on two things: the skillful invocation of unimpeachable sources and the listener's knowledge that no hypocrisy or subterfuge is involved.

In conclusion Mr. Lopez says that "truth reveals itself most fully not in dogma but in the paradox, irony, and contradictions that distinguish compelling narratives—beyond this there are only failures of the imagination: reductionalism in science; fundamentalism in religion; fascism in politics."

FRONTIERS

From Tradition to Principle

IN its last December issue, *Harper's* presented the views of nine contributors—including Jews, Arabs, and others—on the solution, if any, that might be reached ten years from now for the conflicts in the Middle East. The analyses are clarifying but end with little hope. One of the best is by Abba Eban, a not very popular Israeli statesman. He begins with some questions. His comment in reply shows why, through the years, he has earned widespread respect in the rest of the world.

> What is Israel? What are its dimensions and boundaries who belongs and who does not belong to the Zionist enterprise, what is the degree of its commitment to democratic principles and to its Jewish character? All these questions flow from the dilemma involved in exercising a coercive jurisdiction over another nation whose population amounts to some 38 per cent of Israel's and which is joined to Israel by no cement except that of military power.

Speaking of the territories acquired by Israel in the 1967 war, he says:

> No democratic country resembles what Israel would look like, socially and politically, if it were to incorporate the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. If it were to offer the Palestinians an unwanted Israeli citizenship as a substitute for an Arab political destiny, Israel would resemble Algeria before DeGaulle cut it loose from French rule. If it were to incorporate the territories without offering the Palestinians full suffrage, Israel would resemble South Africa. An Israel in which a man's rights were defined by his ethnic identity would be one of the most startling paradoxes of history; an Arab population would be living under Israeli rule in a condition similar to that against which the Jews themselves struggled in many lands over many generations. The political crisis would be that of Israel, the moral crisis that of Diaspora Jews who support it. The late Yigal Allon described the dilemma with stark realism in 1967: "If we give them citizenship we shall cease to be a Jewish State because the balance of decision in parliament will be taken by Arab members who have no real allegiance or devotion to our Zionist purposes and are Israelis against their will . . . If we do not give them the vote we shall cease to be a democratic state and we shall be infected with a colonial image." From this analysis the Labor movement concluded that, after some territorial changes for the sake of security, Israel should release the bulk of the territory for an Arab destiny, in association with Jordan. This was to be done not only for altruistic motives of compromise and international harmony but also, and chiefly, for enlightened self-interest—the preservation of Israel's cohesion and national identity.
>
> There are those who assert that this option has already disappeared. . . .

There are moving passages in the imaginative account of a conversation between a Jew and an Arab in 1994, written by Raja Shihadeh, a practicing attorney of a West Bank town. The Jew, beset by pangs of conscience, says he has organized a group of Jews "who support greater civil rights for Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza." The Arab asked him: "Do you mean you want to grant us full Israeli citizenship? Does your group call for annexing the West Bank to Israel?"

> Moshe looked a little less sure of himself now. He shook his head.
>
> "So," I continued, "your sense of 'justice' will not allow you to accept being citizen of a state that subjects two groups to two different legal systems on the basis of their religion. You find this situation repugnant. Yet you do not demand that the non-Jewish inhabitants of the West Bank be granted full citizenship. Why not?"
>
> "You are asking me to betray what my parents fought for all their lives; the right to live in the land of Eretz Israel—all of it—under the jurisdiction of a Jewish state. If we granted the Arabs citizenship, you would constitute 40 per cent of Israel's population. You would have the right to vote in our elections and would eventually control the country. How could I ever agree to that?"

Later Moshe said:

> "I know one thing, the most important thing: the goals my parents and their community tried to achieve here, the goals I am trying to achieve, are laudable and well-intentioned."
>
> "If that is what you believe, why not join those who want to expel all the Palestinians from the land?

Then your parents' 'laudable goals' will have been fully achieved."

"I condemn terror, on either side."

"Your government banishes Palestinians from their homeland every day, forbids those who remain to travel from one town to another, fails to protect them from the murderers and terrorists of the Jewish underground, and stifles their economic growth through discriminatory laws. Do you condemn *these* acts of terror?"

"I am not a racist. I despise discrimination. But sometimes we are left with no choice." . . .

"Why come to see me, then, if your mind is made up?"

"I was led to believe that you would be more appreciative of my struggle, that you might support what my group is trying to do. But I see that I was wrong."

We left each other then, Moshe and I, and returned to our homes. Our houses were not far apart—we were neighbors, really—but we were subject to different laws, judged in different courts, and shared unequally in the fruits of the land.

We go back to Abba Eban for some figures:

After seventeen years of Israeli occupation, including seven years of control by an avowedly annexationist Likud leadership, the territories remain tenaciously unintegrated. The Jewish population has increased from zero to 29,000, an average of 1,700 a year. But the Arab population increase has far outstripped this, despite the many Arabs who have emigrated; Arabs now number 1.3 million, constituting "only" 98 per cent of the population of the West Bank and Gaza. . . . Some Israelis may still point to the prospect that the settlers will be 100,000 strong in a decade, but many realize that their numbers may well remain static. . . . I do not accept the theory of "irreversibility." . . . The decisive factor here is that the attempt to deny the Arab character of the West Bank and Gaza by demographic and other changes has failed. A territorial compromise leading to demilitarized territories under Arab rule is not only feasible but inevitable.

Abba Eban concludes by saying that to "accept a somewhat more compact territorial configuration in favor of a return to Israel's visionary origins will not be an easy task. But it is far from being a lost cause."

The passage from traditional social forms to rule by principle has never been easy, as Americans, who have been trying to do it for two hundred years, have reason to know. (See the MANAS pamphlet, *High Noon in Latin America*, by Carlos Fuentes.)