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FROM SCIENCE TO PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

THE idea of "knowledge" or "truth," as we use these terms, has long been wholly dependent upon the prior idea that we are able to completely separate ourselves as observers from what we look at or examine. This, as seems obvious, is a consequence of the scientific method or mode of thinking. When things, whether objects or processes, have been isolated from everything else and given precise definition, they are regarded as stable and unchanging. This is a fundamental assumption, necessary to the idea of scientific knowledge. Yet it is an assumption now being questioned.

For confirmation we turn to the early pages of David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), where the author, a theoretical physicist, begins by taking note of our habit of believing that the thinker or observing scientist "is at least in principle completely separate from and independent of the reality that he thinks about," remarking that this notion "is of course firmly embedded in our entire tradition." He wrote his book to show that this fragmenting of reality into subject and object, while in some ways useful, "cannot be maintained consistently." As he says:

> . . . this sort of ability of man to separate himself from his environment and to divide and apportion things ultimately led to a wide range of negative and destructive results, because man lost awareness of what he was doing and thus extended the process of division beyond the limits within which it works properly. In essence, the process of division is a way of *thinking about things* that is convenient and useful mainly in the domain of practical, technical and functional activities (e.g., to divide up an area of land into different fields where various crops are to be grown). However, when this mode of thought is applied more broadly to man's notion of himself and the whole world in which he lives (i.e. to his self-world view), then man ceases to regard the resulting divisions as merely useful or convenient and begins to see and experience himself and his world as actually constituted of separately existent fragments. Being guided by a fragmentary self-world view, man then acts in such a way as to try to break himself and the world up, so that all seems to correspond to his way of thinking. Man thus obtains an apparent proof of the correctness of his fragmentary self-world view though, of course, he overlooks the fact that it is he himself, acting according to his mode of thought, who has brought about the fragmentation that now seems to have an autonomous existence, independent of his will and of his desire.
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> Men have been aware from time immemorial of this state of apparently autonomously existent fragmentation and have often projected myths of a yet earlier "golden age," before the split. between man and nature had yet taken place. Indeed, man has always been seeking wholeness—mental, physical, social, individual.

The point of Bohm's book, as expressed in its title, is that, according to our way of seeing, the "explicate order" is that which becomes visible to us, but this is a result of what is presented, which we define as "real" events and objects or things. This explicate order is no more than an aspect of the totality of the implicate order. Relativity theory, for example, gets at a less visible order through the tools of mathematics, and still another order is revealed by quantum theory, and both these theoretical approaches of physics part company with the mechanistic dynamics of Newtonian theory.

What, then, is the true world around us? We don't know. The true world is named the Implicate Order by Bohm, which we perhaps can never know in its full potentiality, but which reveals aspects of itself as our powers of observation alter or increase. Bohm maintains that consciousness is at the root of the implicate order, since all that we say or can say about the world is an expression of what our consciousness has become aware of.

Interestingly, a man of literature and philosophy, Owen Barfield, in a book published

twenty years ago, presents reflections which reach virtually the same conclusion. The book is *Saving the Appearances* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1:65) and in his introduction the author says:

> Physical science has for a long time stressed the enormous difference between what it investigates as the actual structure of the universe, including the earth, and the phenomena, or appearances, which are presented by that structure to normal human consciousness. In tune with this, most philosophy—at all events since Kant—has heavily emphasized the participation of man's own mind in the creation, or evocation of these phenomena.

We shall now quote from an early chapter of Barfield's book, in which the writer speaks of "representations" and "collective representations," meaning by "representations" how we, individually or collectively, represent to ourselves what we have seen by ordinary means. The collective representation is a consensus concerning such appearances. Barfield writes:

> "A history of the world," as distinct from a history of the unrepresented, must clearly be a history of phenomena that is, of collective representations. But before this part of the subject is approached, it will be well to consider briefly the bearing of this truth on what is sometimes called prehistory. I mean, in particular, the history of the earth before the appearance on it of human beings.
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> When particles of rain, rays of light and our watching eyes are appropriately disposed, we see a rainbow. In the same way, given the existence of particles and the presence of human beings on the earth, there arise collective representations, or in other words the phenomena we call "nature." When dealing with times in which these conditions were present, therefore, it is quite reasonable to describe them and investigate nature scientifically, not only in the manner of physics, but also in the manner of the sciences whose field of study is the past as well as the present, such as geology, ecology, zoology, and to do this *as if* the phenomena were wholly independent of man's sensory and psychological participation. It is not necessarily misleading to do so, and it has proved to be of great practical use. It is however not sufficiently realized that different considerations apply to any description, in familiar terms, of natural events and processes deemed to have taken place before the appearance of human life on earth.

The point that is emerging is that the resulting world is a picture of *our* world—the world seen through our eyes—with events described *as if* we had been there to see them. Descriptions of this sort, Barfield notes, "are continually offered to us and form, I suppose, a recognized part of the education of most children today." He goes on:

> It can do no harm to recall occasionally that the prehistoric evolution of the earth, as it is described in the early chapters of H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*, was not merely never seen. It never occurred. Something no doubt occurred, and what is really being propounded by such popular writers, and, so far as I am aware, by the text-books on which they rely, is this. That at that time the unrepresented was behaving in such a way that, *if* human beings with the collective representations characteristic of the last few centuries of western civilization had been there, the things described would also have been there.
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> This is not quite the same thing. It needs, I should have thought, to be considered in connection with another fact, namely, that when attention is *expressly* directed to the history of the unrepresented (as in calculations of the age of the earth based on radio-activity), it is invariably assumed that the behavior of the unrepresented has remained fundamentally unchanged. Moreover (and this is, to my mind, more important), for those hypothetical "human beings with collective representations characteristic of the last few centuries of western civilization" we might choose to substitute other human beings—those, for instance, who lived one or two or three or more thousand years ago. We should then have to write a different pre-history altogether. And we are not entitled to assume without inquiry that, as an indirect means of suggesting the truth about pre-historic goings-on in the unrepresented, such an alternative "model" would be any less efficient than the one we have in fact chosen. It might be very much more so. . . .
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> It does not of course necessarily follow that all the current descriptions of pre-history are absurd. Even if the usual way of recording what, in the absence of man, was going on in the unrepresented must be criticised as a dubious extrapolation, the descriptions may still, as I have suggested, be valuable, not as actual descriptions, but as notional "models." What is important is, to remember that this is all they are. (Especially will this be the case, if we should ever have to assess the merits of this approach against those of any other possible way of

> acquiring knowledge of the prehistoric past.) For their nature is that of artificial imagery. And when the nature and limitations of artificial images are forgotten, they become idols. Francis Bacon declared that the medieval approach to reality was under the spell of four different sorts of idols, which he called "idols of the cave," "idols of the tribe," and so forth. In the same way, these images of what was going on in the unrepresented in the pre-historic past may be called "idols of the study." At least that is what they are, if their nature and limitations are forgotten. And I am not sure that as yet these have been *noticed.*

What Barfield is after is a conscious return to what he calls *participation,* meaning the sense of unity with the world, the elements of the world, and its forces. Participation for early man—one no longer likes to speak of "primitive man," since we hardly know what this means—was completely natural. Barfield says: "Participation is the extra-sensory relation between man and the phenomena." Then he says:

> All the evidence from etymology and elsewhere goes to show that the further back we penetrate into the past of human consciousness, the more mythical in their nature do the representations become. . . . Apart from speculative thought, it would never have occurred to an ancient Greek to doubt that the heavenly bodies and their spheres were in one way or another representations of divine beings. . . . And we are left in no doubt by Plato's Dialogues, and by the whole language and literature of Greece, what these [representations] were like. There it was the materialist who looked like a Berkeley, and the Greek equivalent of Dr. Johnson would return from speculation to common sense, not by kicking a stone, but by appealing to collective representations made obvious by his upbringing, by the language he spoke and heard spoken all around him, and by the active cults which were his daily matter of fact experience. Even the atoms of Democritus were, of course, not atoms, as the word has been understood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They were imagined as components of mind no less than of matter. . . .
>
> It is in this light that we must approach, if we wish to understand them, not only the speculations of Plato, and Aristotle, for instance, on the nature of the stars and planets, but also the meanings of common words like none and *logos,* and the whole apparatus of language by which they expressed these speculations. If we are content to translate, and to *think,* "mind" for *nous* and "reason" or "word" for *logos,* we are in continual danger of surreptitiously substituting our own phenomena for those which they were in fact dealing with. It is not only that they speculated on whether the planets were "visible gods" or only images of the gods, as statues are; on the nature of the Fifth Essence and its relation to the earthly elements; on the Anima Mundi; on whether or not the Aether, which is the substance of the spheres, has a soul, etc. The very meanings of the incidental words with the help of which they did the speculating, implied participation of *some* sort. Whereas the words into which we struggle to translate them imply the reverse.

In short, what Barfield is saying is that we think we *know* what the real world is, and how it should be described—as entirely separate from ourselves, an assemblage of forces and "things" ruled by more or less mechanical laws—while the ancients, all "pre-scientific" peoples, lived and believed in a world of fantasies and superstitions with which they felt an inner connection of beinghood of some kind, termed by the writer "participation." *Their* ideas, we suppose, were "constructions" of some sort, while our ideas are at least approximations of what is really there.

But, Barfield proposes—and successfully demonstrates—that our ideas are also constructions, founded on the radical separation of mind and matter declared by Descartes and the mechanistic relationships Galileo isolated in his experiments with the movement of bodies. We call this the scientific world-view and assume that all earlier ways of thinking about nature and ourselves resulted from childlike ignorance and primitive belief. Barfield is suggesting that the feelings and intuitions of early man may have a greater claim to being reflections of the real world than the "collective representations" of the physical scientists whose claims we have adopted—lately without really understanding them—as indisputable truth.

But according to David Bohm, the current representations of the world by the physicists are no more than equations relating to projections of

the real world which are evident to our senses—indeed, constructions from abstractions based on selected qualities of matter—qualities Galileo called "primary" which he was able to measure and which he therefore defined as "real." It is in this sense that we are now able to say that consciousness plays a part in determining the nature of the physical world. If our growing awareness brings into evidence other projections, leading to further abstractions, our definitions of "reality" will necessarily change, and there can be no limit, Bohm suggests, to such developments. This is clear from the conclusion to his book, in which he says:

> Our overall approach has thus brought together questions of the nature of the cosmos, of matter in general, of life, and of consciousness. All of these have been considered to be projections of a common ground. This we may call the ground of all that is, at least in so far as this may be sensed and known by us, in our present phase of unfoldment of consciousness. Although we have no detailed perception or knowledge of this ground it is still in a certain sense enfolded in our consciousness, in the ways in which we have outlined, as well as perhaps in other ways that are yet to be discovered.
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> Is this ground the absolute end of everything? In our proposed views concerning the general nature of the "totality of all that is,' we regard even this ground as a mere stage, in the sense that there could in principle be an infinity of further development beyond it. At any particular moment in this development each such set of views that may arise will constitute at most a *proposal.* It is not to be taken as an *assumption* about what the final truth is supposed to be and still less as *a conclusion* concerning the nature of such truth. Rather, this proposal becomes itself an *active factor* in the totality of existence which includes ourselves as well as the objects of our thoughts and experimental investigations. Any further proposals on this process will, like those already made, have to be *viable.* That is to say, one will require of them a general self-consistency as well as consistency in what flows from them in life as a whole. Through the force of an even deeper, more inward necessity in this totality, some new state of affairs may emerge in which both the world as we know it and our ideas about it may undergo an unending process of yet further change.

The implication, here, is that science will be inevitably redefined, as both Michael Polanyi (in *Personal Knowledge)* and Abraham Maslow (in *The Psychology of Science)* have already made clear. This should give us no cause for regret. The fruit of the science now practiced has been the destruction of inherent meaning, first in nature, then in ourselves, followed, it seems, by development of the capacity to destroy the world.

There was no need for science to have this consequence. Science served a nobler purpose for the Greeks. As Erich Kahler tells us in *The Meaning of History:*

> The Greeks did not yet seek knowledge simply for knowledge's sake, nor essentially for technological and economic advantage. They were not concerned with that aimless amassing of facts, such as is practiced in our historical and social sciences, with that theoretical pragmatism, collecting data for future use, which, even should they be called for, could hardly be reached in the endless files of incoherent material. Greek historical research was pragmatic in a way utterly different from ours: the Greeks wanted to know in order to achieve an orientation in their world, in order to live in the right way; knowledge was closely connected with action, it was indeed part of action. And living and acting in the right way was not necessarily equated with acting *successfully.* It meant acting and living in accordance with the cosmic order. Research, empirical as well as speculative, was therefore essentially search for the meaning of the cosmic order, meaning, not as purpose and end—for within the eternal recurrence of events no purpose or goal of human life was conceivable—but meaning as established form. From pre-Socratic to Stoic thinking the quest for the meaning of cosmic order, which human conduct had to follow, was the prime motive of inquiry.

The only reason we are likely to resist the attempt to establish another sort of science—a science based, as David Bohm suggests, on a whole much larger than that presented to the senses, and a whole for which we seek, on Owen Barfield's recommendation, for conscious participation—would be the apparent difficulty in confirming subjective discovery, if this is included in the field available for scientific investigation.

That, indeed, is the problem which lies before us. How can we learn to be content with a science which deals not only with "public truth," but also with the inner realizations which, while private and individual, may lead to wisdom? The discussions by Barfield and Bohm should be a help in this, since there is a sense in which even physical science they show to have an internal or subjective ground in the assumptions we adopt that make it possible. Yet giving up the cast-iron certainties that for centuries we have thought that past science provided will not be easy, since science will no longer be the work of only a body of elite intellectuals, but will become the responsibility of all individuals.

REVIEW
EPIC AND/OR IDYLL

THE books of Scott and Helen Nearing, recording their life on the land of New England for half a century, amount to description of a complete culture—culture in all the senses of this ambiguous word—set down in terms well within the comprehension of virtually all the people of this country. For about half this time they lived on a farm they reclaimed in Vermont, the other half on the coast of Maine. They supported themselves by cultivation of the land, in Vermont making maple sugar their cash crop, and blueberries in Maine. They turned the necessities of subsistence on the land into a personal and social educational enterprise, working out a way of self-support which gave them time to write books about the character and rationale of this life, and about the social issues confronting the American people, and also the modern world. As an economist Scott wrote about social issues as well as farm life in New England, while Helen, an artist (a violinist), wrote about the arts of domestic economy, including building, gardening, and cooking. The disciplines of the mind gave all their literary work its level and quality. Taking these aptitudes and accomplishments together, this work was the expression of the culture of human life.

Their best known book is probably *Living the Good Life*, first published in 1954, with a later edition in 1970 by Schocken Books. This was the story of their life in Vermont, where they migrated from New York City at the depth of the Depression in 1932. Then, having moved to Maine in 1952, they produced *Continuing the Good Life* in 1979, an account of their life there. Since we have this book at hand, we take the beginning of the chapter on their cash crop in Maine as a sample of the substance and flavor of their writing:

> Homesteaders in the United States, as elsewhere, need a cash crop. Scrimp and manage as they will, they cannot live in the midst of a money economy without using some cash money, if only for the purchase of postage stamps.
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> We produce 85 per cent of our food and all of our fuel, except gasoline for the car. We must pay cash for spare parts, replacements, hardware. We pay our rent when we pay our local taxes. Some of our clothing we make, some we buy in thrift shops and at rummage sales; a few clothes we buy new. We use and buy no habit-forming drugs, including alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. Our supply of printed matter, postage and stationery comes to us via our Social Science Institute, to which organization we hand over all royalties and lecture fees. Our travel expenses are paid by those who ask us to talk.
>
> Surrounded as we are by a cash-credit economy, we need a certain amount of cash income each year. If the amount of needed cash can be figured out in advance, we can stick to our rule of no credit purchasing and no interest slavery.
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> We went to Vermont expecting that our cash income would come from our wood lot: saw logs, firewood, poles and posts, greens for decoration, pulp wood. Our first year in Vermont convinced us that the easiest way to provide cash was to make maple syrup and convert a good part of our crop into maple sugar. This we did for years.
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> Our Maine farm does not have a dozen mature sugar maples on its entire acreage. After several years of experience with selling lettuce, spinach, asparagus, peas and other vegetables, we decided in favor of berries as our cash crop.
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> Like Maine, our area of Vermont had been largely occupied by wild blueberries and huckleberries. We frequently discussed the possibilities of blueberry culture with our Vermont neighbors. Our experimenting began in a small way with less than a hundred two-year-old hybrid blueberry plants, carefully selected for their frost hardiness. Only in the third or fourth year does a plantation of hybrid blueberries begin to pay its own way. When we left Vermont in 1952 this experimental blueberry plantation had begun to bear substantial crops.

While in Maine the county agent warned them that blueberries could not survive the Maine winters, they found a way to make them survive and supply a cash crop. To extend the growing season for garden vegetables, they constructed a masonry, wood and glass greenhouse, ten by forty

feet long, where they were able to grow some plants the year round, even though winter temperatures may go to 25 degrees below zero. A lot of the time they learned from experience how to do things which their neighbors claimed was impossible.

In another book, *Our Sun-Heated Greenhouse* (Garden Way Associates, 1977), which has numerous photographs, they tell about building and using the greenhouse:

> We set ourselves to find out ways in which we could lengthen the period of each year during which we might add to our fresh vegetable season. A homemade, unheated greenhouse provided exactly the needed protection for many plants inside its four walls.
>
> We began our winter gardening in an unheated greenhouse almost by accident. A small seedling (or seed) got lost under a bench, and in early January, going by chance into the ice-cold building, we found a flourishing, lush, and sizable lettuce plant growing through a clump of dry leaves. It had survived, unwatered and untended, through several months of outside freezing, in a sheltered but chill corner of a cold glassed-in building. If this could happen, uncared for and unbeknownst, why could not more lettuces and other plants, survive, under better conditions, still without artificial heat? We were launched on an experimental period of greenhouse building and planting that has provided us with fresh green things through thirty winters of freezing and below-zero weather.

How have the Nearings thought about the meaning of their adventure on the land in New England? This question has an answer in the concluding chapter of *Continuing the Good Life:*

> Personally, we in our entire homesteading venture have endeavored to keep our social as well as physical muscles in shape. We tried, as a couple, and insofar as we could in groups, to set up and continue a life pattern to maintain health and sanity in a period of social insecurity, conflict, disruption and disintegration.
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> We began experimenting with an alternative life pattern nearly half a century ago, in 1932. We were not young, but we were adventurous. Our first steps were tentative. As we proceeded, we became clearer in our thinking and surer that the course we were following was right for us.
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> We were trying out a life style that was not new in history, but was new in our generation. We left city living, with its civilized polish and its murky poverty, and launched out into a simpler, more self-sufficient life in the country.
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> Our general aim was to set up a useful economy for ourselves, independent of the established market economy and for the most part under our own control, thereby freeing ourselves from undue dependence on the Establishment.
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> We wanted to provide ourselves with the economic means that would free at least a third of our time and energy to carry on our professional work and our interest in improving the social environment.
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> Specifically, we have provided ourselves during more than four decades with the basic necessaries of life in exchange for a sufficient amount of planning, persistence and hard work.
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> We have been able to carry on our writing and research. Scott has written six books since leaving the city, only one of which saw the light of day in the commercial book market. Six additional books were written jointly with Helen. She has continued her life-long interest in music and has added secretarial, editorial, writing and house-building skills to her accomplishments. . . .
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> We have done our best to contribute to the knowledge and possibilities of homesteading in New England for four decades.

The several books chronicling this undertaking began by being epics and finished as idylls, in both spirit and intent. Scott died at a few days over a hundred in August of 1983, while Helen, now eighty and in good health, continues to live at the farm at Harborside (a small community of seventy families that does not get on maps) on Penobscot Bay in Maine. She also continues to write. One recent volume, a collection rather than original work, *Wise Words on the Good Life* (Schocken, 1980), is an anthology of quotations. Helen loves old books and has spent many hours in the rare book rooms of libraries making extracts. Here is one from a letter by George Washington to Arthur Young, written in 1788:

> The more I am acquainted with agricultural affairs, the better I am pleased with them; insomuch, that I can no where find so great satisfaction as in those innocent and useful pursuits. In indulging these feelings, I am led to reflect how much more delightful in an undebauched mind, is the task of making improvements on the earth, than all the vainglory which can be acquired from ravaging it, by the most uninterrupted career of conquests.

In 1974 Dutton brought out *The Good Life Album of Helen & Scott Nearing*, made up of some 200 photographs taken of both, almost from the cradle to their life together. In the text by Helen, she says:

> Scott was at a particularly low ebb when I met him in 1930. He had no paying work at the time and had just been expelled from the Communist Party on grounds of insubordination for having published a book on imperialism of which the Party disapproved. He was not allowed to speak or write or teach in any quarter. We were exceedingly poor and lived in a three-room cold-water unheated (except for a small wood stove) flat on Avenue C and 14th Street, New York, for which we paid a royal $20 a month. We decided we would rather be poor in the country than poor in the city so, in 1932, we moved to a rundown old farm in southern Vermont, for which we paid $300 down and took on an $800 mortgage.

That was the start of the Nearing epic, the rest of it being in their numerous books. Curious and interested readers may obtain a list of all these books and their prices by writing to Helen or the Social Science Institute, Harborside, Maine.

COMMENTARY
SOLUTION BY DISASTER

BACK in 1932, the year in which the Depression just about hit bottom—at least in eastern urban areas—Scott and Helen Nearing, Scott about fifty, Helen twenty years younger, decided, as she puts it (see Review, page 8), that they "would rather be poor in the country than poor in the city," and they bought a rundown Vermont farm. Old farms, in those days, were almost worthless so they were able to buy the place, and twenty years later, when they moved to Maine, they left a farm with restored land and a good cash crop of maple sugar.

Today, ordinary folk are practically unable to buy homes or farms with which to start out in life. What the Nearings did has now been made practically impossible by inflated land values, and it is difficult to see much prospect of a change for the better, save by another Great Depression. This would be a considerable price to pay for an opportunity to do what every American family should be able to do, as an option in any society worth having.

The only other possibility is that more land trusts will be formed, as the number of people with the Nearing spirit grows to the point where cooperative action becomes possible. But that will be a long, slow path.

A curious sidelight on conditions of this sort is provided by something in the book we referred to here three weeks ago—*In the Name of Progress,* a critical study of foreign aid. The authors, after speaking of Nyerere's well-intentioned but failing attempt to force a form of socialism on the people of Tanzania, say that for the rural people of this country "the good times can come when the national economy is depressed." For then transport breaks down and the support system of Western-type agriculture fails. Then the people can no longer take part in the market economy, and since they can not bring their produce to market where, even if they did manage to get there, the prices are too low to make it worth while, the result is that "they eat it themselves."

"We must," a UN representative in Tanzania has said, "distinguish therefore between the state economy, which is in extreme crisis, and the village economies, many of which are doing quite well—and over 80 per cent of the people in Tanzania live in villages."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A DEFENSE OF EDWARD ABBEY

A FEW weeks ago—on the tenuous logic that this is a department on the young, therefore on education, therefore concerned with the teaching of English, and since criticism of books and plays is a part of the study of English—we printed here an essay by Harold Goddard, first published sixty-nine years ago, on the plays of George Bernard Shaw, with particular attention to *Major Barbara,* which he had just been to a performance of. Goddard told his readers that they needed to read Shaw for his "poetry," something you don't expect to find at all in what Shaw wrote. But Goddard gives a larger meaning to poetry, insisting that it is not only found in Shaw, but that it is always the underlying quality in his works. Until then we had always regarded Shaw as a peculiarly accomplished court jester, and Goddard gave us reason to enlarge our appreciation of him.

We now have an article by Wendell Berry, also on criticism, and we use the same excuse for speaking of it here. Berry's point would be good for us all, young and old, to take home and think about. He makes it in an article on Edward Abbey in the March issue of *Whole Earth Review*—a defense of Abbey as a man and a writer. MANAS has a special fondness for Abbey, having "discovered" him back in 1958 when only a paperback of *The Brave Cowboy* was available (years before the movie came out) and being delighted by the unconventional twists of the story. Our review was headed, "Did They Really Read the Manuscript?"

The reason for this question was an incident early in the story in which two students, named Bondi and Burns, at a western state university posted on the bulletin board a notice advocating "Civil Disobedience to Selective Service and other Federal Activities." They signed the notice with their own names, then added "H. D. Thoreau, P. B. Shelley, Emiliano Zapata." In a report to the local sheriff the university administration remarked that the last three signatories were "suspected of being fictitious, as no students bearing such names were then registered at the University." Later one of the two students, Bondi, found his way to jail as a war resister, and when his partner visited him there and wondered how he managed to be put in jail, Bondi said:

> "I was afraid you'd ask me that. It sure was a piece of muddling. I never intended for it to work out this way at all Here I had thought that since I was a veteran and a sort of scholar and even a gentleman by birth my old draft board would let me get away with breaking the written law. And as a matter of fact they tried to help me; did all they possibly could for me. Damned nice people—they didn't want any unseemly dealings with the Government any more than I did. The difficulty was they wanted me to register as a conscientious objector. Conscientious objector to what? I asked them. To war, they said. But I love war I said; my father got rich off the last one canning dog food for the infantry; all Bondis love war. Then what do you object to? they said. I object to slavery, I said, compulsory military service is a form of slavery. But there is no provision in the law for such an exemption, they said. But it's the law itself that I object to, I said. That is illegal, they informed me. The law is unconstitutional, I replied. Then you had better take up the matter with the courts, they said. I'm a busy man, I said. What are you doing, they asked. I'm constructing a metaphysics based on the theory of unipolar planes of reality, I said. Would you mind repeating that? they said. That would be tautologous, I replied." "Then they put you in jail," Burns said; "can't say I blame them."

This intriguing episode, of course, didn't get into the film, but one does have trouble imagining Kirk Douglas taking part in a dialogue like that. So we called our review of the book, "'Did They Really Read the Manuscript?"

In his defense of Abbey, Berrv begins by noting that Abbey's chief offense is in not behaving (or writing) as a card-carrying conservationist or environmentalist is supposed to behave. Citing one review which reflects a characteristic feeling toward Abbey, in which he is accused of "elitism, iconoclasm, arrogance, and xenophobia," Berry says that these charges reflect assumptions about Abbey that wholly misunderstand him; he does not write as a "type," an environmentalist, but as an idiosyncratic human being. Again and again he breaks the rules of a proper environmentalist. Berry says:

> Such assumptions, I think, rest on yet another that is more important and more needful of attention: the assumption that our environmental problems are the result of bad policies, bad political decisions, and that, therefore, our salvation lies in winning unbelievers to the right political side. If all those assumptions were true, then I suppose that the objections of Mr. Drabelle [the reviewer] would be sustainable: Mr. Abby's obstreperous traits would be as unsuitable in him as in any other political lobbyist. Those assumptions, however, are false.
>
> Mr. Abbey is not an environmentalist. He is, certainly, a defender of some things that environmentalists defend, but he does not write merely in defense of what we call "'the environment." Our environmental problems, moreover, are not, at root, political; they are cultural. As Edward Abbey knows and has been telling us, our country is not being destroyed by bad politics; it is being destroyed by a bad way of life. Bad politics is merely another result. To see that the problem is far more than political is to return to reality, and a look at reality permits us to see, for example, what Mr. Abbey's xenophobia amounts to.

After examination of things said by Mr. Abbey that often bring either environmentalist or liberal objection, and finding nevertheless a measure of validity in his views, Berry sums up:

> The trouble, then, with Mr. Abbey—a trouble, I confess, that I am disposed to like—is that he speaks insistently as himself. In any piece of his, we are apt to have to deal with all of him, caprices and prejudices included. He does not simply *submit* to our criticism, as does any author who publishes, but virtually demands it. And so his defenders, it seems to me, are obliged to take him seriously, to assume that he generally means what he says, and, instead of apologizing for him, to acknowledge that he is not always right or always fair. He is *not*, of course. Who is? For me, part of the experience of reading him has always been, at certain points, that of arguing with him.

This was certainly the case for us, back in 1976, when we read Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, about a group of righteous souls who thought it fitting to dynamite or otherwise destroy the billboards which deface the highways of our fair land. We thought it a terrible book, and we hope Berry does, too; but it couldn't obliterate our memory and appreciation of *Desert Solitaire* (1970), which we have quoted with pleasure.

Berry has this provocative paragraph:

> My defense of him begins with the fact that I *want* him to argue with, as I *want* to argue with Thoreau, another writer full of cranky opinions and strong feelings. If we value these men and their work, we are compelled to acknowledge that such writers are not made by tailoring to the requirements, and trimming to the tastes, of any and all. They submit to standards raised, though not made, by themselves. We, with our standards, must take them as they come, defend ourselves against them as we can, agree with them if we must. If we want to avail ourselves of the considerable usefulness and the considerable pleasure of Edward Abbey, we will have to like him as he is, then we will have to ignore him, if we can. My own notion is that he is going to become harder to ignore, and for good reasons—not the least being that the military-industrial state is working as hard as it can to prove him right.

We don't know why Mr. Berry says that about Mr. Abbey, but this may be only because he has read Abbey's latest collection of essays, *Down the River*. Heaven only knows what the man said. As Berry puts it:

> It seems virtually certain that no reader can read much of Mr. Abbey without finding some insult to something that he or she approves of. Mr. Abbey is very hard, for instance on "movements"—the more solemn and sacred they are, the more they tempt his ridicule. He is a great irreverencer of sacred cows.

One begins to see the importance of Berry's point of view, its relevance for criticism. Here he is sharing with Abbey a basic suspicion of "group opinion." He doesn't like the size of the waves made by shallowly converted opinion on which politics must rely. They may do some good, but are as likely to do harm. Seeing this is the only foundation for sound criticism. Speaking of it is likely to reduce the size of the critic's audience. Hence Berry's seven-page defense of Edward Abbey.

FRONTIERS

In the Mail

A HELPFUL reader has sent us a neatly calligraphed sheet bearing the names—as the heading puts it—of the things that Will Destroy Us, with Gandhi's signature at the bottom of the list. We doubt if the compiler or anyone else could locate exactly in Gandhi's ninety odd volumes where these words appear, but this hardly seems to matter since they are true and Gandhi would surely not disown them. This seems authority equal to precise citation, so we reproduce them here:

SEVEN THINGS THAT
WILL DESTROY US

Politics without Principle

Wealth without Work

Business without Morality

Pleasure without Conscience

Science without Humanity

Knowledge without Character

Worship without Sacrifice

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

From another reader comes the sentencing statement by U.S. District Judge Miles Lord of two persons who did something or other in opposition to the activities of the manufacturer, Sperry, having to do with the making of bombs. The two came before the judge for sentencing on Nov. 8, 1984, in Minnesota. He said:

> It is the allegation of these young people that they committed the acts here complained of as a desperate plea to the American people and its government to stop the military madness which they sincerely believe will destroy us all, friend and enemy alike. As I ponder over the punishment to be meted out to these two people who were attempting to unbuild weapons of mass destruction, we must ask ourselves: Can it be that those of us who build weapons to kill are engaged in a more sanctified endeavor than those who would by their acts attempt to counsel moderation and mediation as an alternative method of settling international disputes? Why are we so fascinated by a power so great that we cannot comprehend its magnitude? What is so sacred about a bomb, so romantic about a missile? Why do we condemn and hang individual killers while extolling the virtues of warmongers? What is that fatal fascination which attracts us to the thought of mass destruction of our brethren in another country? How can we even entertain the thought that all people on one side of an imaginary line must die and, if we be so ungodly cynical as to countenance that thought, have we given thought to the fact that in executing that decree we will also die? Who draws these lines and who has so decreed? . . .
>
> The anomaly of this situation is that I am called upon to punish two individuals who were charged with having caused damage to the property of a corporation in the amount of $33,000. It is this self-same corporation which only a few months ago was before me accused of having wrongfully embezzled from the U.S. Government the sum of $3.6 million. . . The government demanded only that Sperry pay back a mere 10% of the amount by which the corporation had been unlawfully enriched. Could it be that these corporate men who were working to build weapons of mass destruction received special treatment because of the nature of their work?
>
> I am called upon to determine the amount of restitution that is to be required of the two individuals who have done damage to the property of Sperry. The financial information obtained by the probation officers indicates that neither of the defendants owes any money to anyone. While Ms. Katt has no assets, Mr. LaForge is comparatively well endowed. He owns a 1968 Volkswagen, a guitar, a sleeping bag and $200 in cash. . . .
>
> A judge sitting here as I do is not called upon to do that which is politically expedient or popular but is called upon to exercise his calm and deliberate judgment in a manner best suited to accomplish and accommodate and vindicate the rights of the people acting through its government and the rights of those people who are the subject of such actions. The most popular thing to do at this particular time would be to sentence them to a ten-year period of imprisonment, and some judges might be disposed to do that.

Judge Lord did what the reader by now expects—he imposed sentences of six months and then suspended them.

* * *

MANAS has received from an Indian reader and friend a statement by K. S. Acharlu, Chairman

of the Academy of Gandhian Studies, Marjorie Sykes, of the Friends' Center, and Radhakrishna, Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, addressed to the Gandhi Foundation in Los Angeles, which recently announced its plan to erect an impressive memorial to the late Indira Gandhi, to be built in the shape of a star as a symbol of peace and human unity. The signers begin by saying that such a memorial is a worthy undertaking and will be appreciated by all Indians. They then add:

> However, the signatories of this letter appeal to you to reconsider your proposal that Mahatma Gandhi's name should be coupled with that of Indira Gandhi in this project. Their common name, Gandhi, does not indicate any close relationship between them, and in fact the two leaders held widely differing attitudes in some of the most fundamental matters of life. The Mahatma's identification with the poorest is well known, his memorial is already present in India in the poor man's hut of mud and bamboo which was his chosen love in Sevagram, and in the austere and simple dignity of the national memorial at Rajghat in New Delhi. We submit that such a building as is planned now is entirely alien from the spirit of the Mahatma and that his name should not be associated with it in any way.
>
> We also appeal to you to reconsider your proposal to call the new building a "temple." To us in India, a temple (like a church or a mosque) is built to the glory of God: the word should not be employed to describe a memorial tower to Mrs. Gandhi. This would not preclude setting aside an area within it for prayer and meditation (as does the United Nations).
>
> We believe that in making this appeal we express the feelings of millions of Indians who have no opportunity of knowing what has been proposed.

Should this project, which is for a thirty-storey structure made of plastic materials, held in place by cable and compression members, designed by a woman architect, be carried out, it will be of interest to see whether the suggestions of these Gandhians have had appropriate attention.