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A LOOK AT INTELLECTUAL PROCESSES

COMMENTING on the demise of the *Saturday Review*—once deservedly known as the *Saturday Review of Literature*—Norman Cousins, long its editor (until six years ago), begins with a practical explanation. It has to do with the policies of the Post Office. In his article in the *Christian Science Monitor* for August 31, he says:

> In the early years of this nation's history, magazines and newspapers were considered part of the country's circulatory system, along with interstate roads, and the postal rates were nominal. The development of subscription magazines was largely the product of this low-cost delivery system.
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> About 20 years ago or so, however, government policy toward periodicals radically changed. As a result, it now costs about 12 times as much to send a magazine through the mails as it did less than a generation ago. No other factor involved in publishing a magazine, even allowing for inflation, has seen such an increase. When you take into account the fact that a magazine also has to use the mails for obtaining and renewing its subscribers, you can see how the economics of publishing a magazine can be unhinged by present-day postal costs.

The Post Office decision to raise the rates for magazines could be interpreted as saying that only market forces should determine whether a magazine survives or not, just as, more recently, modern medicine, through the greatly enlarged fees doctors charge for their services, has been saying that market forces should determine whether or not a sick or injured person should have professional help in getting well. In any event, submission to market forces by publishers and other "cultural" enterprises *is* part of Mr. Cousins' account of why the *Saturday Review* could not survive. Then, speaking of "the sleaziness that has infected the national culture in recent years," he says:

> There seems to be a fierce competition, especially in entertainment and publishing, to find ever-lower rungs on the ladder of taste. . . . The annihilation of taste has not spared language. There is the curious notion that freedom is somehow synonymous with gutter jargon. At one time people who worked in the arts would boast to one another about their ability to communicate ideas that attacked social injustice and brutality. Now some of them seem to feel they have struck a blow for humanity if only they can use enough four-letter words. The trouble with this kind of verbiage is not just that it is offensive but that it is trite to the point of being threadbare.
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> The decline of language has been marked by a corresponding rise in incoherence. The words "you know" or "I mean" are strewn like loose gravel through everyday communication. I don't believe in raising taxes, but I would happily support a bill that would tax the bejeebers out of people each time they use "you know" or "I mean."
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> The debasement of language not only reflects but produces a retreat from civility. The slightest disagreement has become an occasion for violent reactions. Television has educated an entire generation of Americans to believe that the normal way of reacting to a slight is by punching someone in the face.
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> On every hand, there is evidence that people are losing the art of reasonable discourse. My friends in Congress tell me that in recent years the tone of letters from constituents has drastically changed. At one time, most letters tried to state a position reasonably. Today, people seem to feel that denunciation is the standard form.

What is going wrong? Any reply to this question is likely to be inadequate and incomplete. The fact of the decline in language and the way it is used is notorious. Seven years ago, in the *American Scholar* (Autumn, 1975), Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., spoke of words divorced from their objects which become "instruments less of communication than of deception." What are the circumstances which not only permit but encourage this change? Schlesinger wrote:

> The rise of mass communications, the growth of large organizations and novel technologies, the invention of advertising and public relations, the professionalization of education—all contributed to linguistic pollution, upsetting the ecological balance between words and their environment. In our own

> time the purity of language is under unrelenting attack from every side—from professors as well as from politicians, from newspapermen as well as from advertising men, from men of the cloth as well as from men of the sword, and not least from those compilers of modern dictionaries who propound the suicidal thesis that all usages are equal and correct.

To dramatize what has happened to our language, our speech—indeed, our thinking—Prof. Schlesinger recalls the writing of the Founding Fathers, as it appeared in the *Federalist* nearly two hundred years ago. They used a language that was lucid and felicitous, "marked by Augustan virtues of harmony, balance and elegance."

> People not only wrote this noble language. They also read it. The essays in defense of the Constitution signed Publius appeared week after week in the New York press during the winter of 1787-88; and the demand was so great that the first thirty-six Federalist papers were published in book form while the rest were still coming out in the papers. One can only marvel at the sophistication of an audience that consumed and relished pieces so closely reasoned, so thoughtful and analytical.

Why are there not readers of that sort—to say nothing of such writers—today? Mass communication and the competition in vulgar appeal would be one explanation, but we need a more fundamental account, and call upon Emerson, in the section on Language in "Nature," for help. Originally, he says, we developed our language from the analogy of nature with our lives. Nature supplies the encyclopedia of the raw materials of meaning. "All the facts in natural history," he says, "taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren, like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life." He continues:

> As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols. The same symbols are found to make the original elements of all languages. It has moreover been observed, that the idioms of all languages approach each other in passages of the greatest eloquence and power. And as this is the first language, so is it the last. This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type of somewhat in human life, never loses its power to affect us. It is this which gives that piquancy to the conversation of a strong-natured farmer or backwoodsman, which all men relish.

On this foundation Emerson gives his theory of decline:

> A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire for riches, of pleasure, of powers, and of praise,—and duplicity and falsehood take the place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will, is in a degree lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not; a paper currency is employed, when there is no bullion in the vaults. In due time, the fraud is manifest, and words lose all power to stimulate the understanding or the affections. Hundreds of writers may be found in every long-civilized nation, who for a short time believe, and make others believe, that they see and utter truths, who do not of themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country, those, namely, who hold primarily on nature.

The way back:

> But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things. . . . The moment our discourse rises above the ground line of familiar facts, and is inflamed with passion or exalted by thought, it clothes itself in images. A man conversing in earnest, if he watch his intellectual processes, will find that a material image, more or less luminous, arises in his mind, contemporaneous with every thought, which furnishes the investment of the thought. Hence, good writing and brilliant discourse are perpetual allegories. This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made.

There are passages in Richard Goodwin's *The American Condition* (first published in the *New Yorker* in January and February of 1977) which seem worthy of extending Emerson's insight. Goodwin wrote:

> Communities originated as enclaves of the natural world.
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> Since the connection with nature was established through the senses rather than by ideology or authority, the individual's perception of himself was strengthened—but within the framework of a shared experience that helped to sustain the bonds of community. . . . The elimination of nature from our daily life loosens the ties of community through its effect on our emotional capacities and by removing a traditional bond of shared experience.
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> The fragmentation of social existence, having destroyed previous forms of authority, also makes inconceivable the establishment of an accepted system of values and moral conduct. . . . The united will that is required to regulate the social process is necessarily transferred (alienated) to an external authority.

In the passage from the medieval communities to the modern age, Goodwin says, the web of life broke down. The cash nexus took the place of human relationships and obligations.

> As money took on independent value, personal obligations could be fulfilled through payment—cash instead of services, gold instead of horses and bowmen. Deeply personal ties, which had extruded the consciousness of the age, a mode of thought, and a structure of values and perceptions, metamorphosed into commercial bonds. You no longer owed yourself; you owed money. The spirit of commerce gradually infiltrated extensive regions of social life which had not received the benefits of increasing wealth. . . . This invasion came armed with the powerful, liberating idea of value. Once obligations had value, once they could be priced, then the fact of payment overshadowed, and ultimately displaced, the identity of the debtor. The new kind of debt was impersonal, even transferable. . . . The earth was transmuted into capital, its produce into income, and income into goods—not only to maintain life but to bring comfort, pleasure, luxury, beauty The powerful sought ownership in addition to power and, finally, as a source of added power.

With this as our psychological environment, we have no difficulty in understanding why, if you stir it all up and then let it settle, what comes to the surface as the most frequently used metaphor of the time is "the bottom line." We should add, however, the contribution of the mechanist scientists and engineers. The prestige of machines is surely responsible for the phrase, "I was turned on," or "off," as the case may be. People think of themselves as passive gadgets, variously caused to respond to external stimuli. How else could such language become popular?

In one place in his essay on language, "Standing by Words," Wendell Berry gives several illustrations of the impoverishment of speech by scientistic assumptions and outlook, then says:

> As industrial technology advances and enlarges, and in the process assumes greater social, economic, and political force, it carries people away from where they belong by history, culture, deeds, association, and affection. And it destroys the landmarks by which they might return. Often it destroys the nature or the character of the places they have left. The very possibility of a practical connection between thought and the world is thus destroyed. Culture is driven into the mind where it cannot be preserved. Displaced memory, for instance, is hard to keep in mind, harder to hand down. The little that survives is attenuated—without practical force. That is why the Jews, in Babylon, wept when they remembered Zion. The mere memory of a place cannot preserve it, nor apart from the place itself can it long survive in the mind. . . .The enlargement of industrial technology is thus analogous to war. It continually requires the movement of knowledge and responsibility away from home. It thrives and burgeons upon the disintegration of homes, the subjugation of homelands. It requires that people cease to cooperate directly to fulfill local needs from local sources, and begin instead to deal with each other always across the rift that divides producer and consumer, and always competitively. The idea of the independence of individual farms, shops, communities, and households is anathema to industrial technologists. The rush to nuclear energy and the growth of the space colony idea are powered by the industrial will to cut off the possibility of a small-scale energy technology—which is to say the possibility of small-scale personal and community acts. The corporate producers and their sycophants in the universities and the government will do virtually anything (or so they have obliged us to assume) to keep people from acquiring necessities in any way except by buying them.

Small wonder, then, that, as Norman Cousins says, there is a fierce competition among publishers "to find ever-lower rungs on the ladder of taste."

The very basis of taste has been excluded from both thought and action.

Well, we have made something of a catalog of the various avenues of self-defeat by which "modernity" has been reached. Those big institutions are all out there, attempting with some success to confine our lives within the patterns they elaborate, making us increasingly dependent on the structures they are erecting, and seeming to leave criticism and dissent no choice for hope except in nostalgia for the past. Yet an examination of history suggests that industrialization is something that we—we and most of the world after us—had to go through. It is natural to wonder why, since if we could grasp the drive behind such a historical necessity we might be able to exhaust its energies and get on to better ways.

This is a philosophical question. It might take the form of asking: What are we human beings doing on the planet? Are we functional to some universal meaning in the drama of existence, or is the world a merely accidental place brought into being by atoms bouncing around at random in the void?

What can we accept as evidence bearing on the answer to such a question?

We are looking for axioms on which to build a system of self-explanation, but the inquiry may prove too vast, the reference-points inaccessible. Conceivably, the myths around which countless people in the past organized their lives will be of help. We are thinking, here, of the story of Prometheus—Prometheus as the type of mankind. Prometheus was both thinker and inventor, both technologist and visionary. By bringing to the bemused and apathetic tribe of humans the fire of mind, he imposed on them the obligations of moral decision growing out of their self-awareness. Beings who make moral decisions are able to go wrong. For reasons which are not entirely clear, it is easier to go wrong than right. Moreover, those who know what is right are not convincing to the rest when they explain what they know. They are called myth-makers, "idealistic," and said to be impractical. Plato's story of the Cave applies here. There is considerable cost in doing right, and the cost exacts high interest from those who attempt to do right merely as followers, without understanding why.

Ultimately, it seems, we learn only from experience. Yet we have minds, and one of the abilities of mind is to penetrate to the principle underlying forms of experience, making it unnecessary to go through every last episode in the ranges of experience now before us.

The present moment of history seems a time when we need to expose the principle underlying the urge to develop an absolutely controlling technology. What makes us want this? We need to know in order to prevent ourselves from building a machine which will destroy itself after making our lives totally dependent on it.

More than two thousand years ago, Socrates walked the streets of Athens trying to persuade his countrymen that it was better to suffer than to do wrong. By this and other doctrines he antagonized enough Athenians to bring about his own death. They could not see the forthcoming evil that he predicted for them, and were indifferent to his final warning:

> If you expect to stop denunciation of your wrong way of life by putting people to death, there is something amiss with your reasoning. This way of escape is neither possible nor creditable. The best and easiest way is not to stop the mouths of others, but to make yourself as good as you can. This is my last message to you who voted for my condemnation.

Today we are not so fortunate as to have a Socrates among us, but at least there are those able to point to the inescapable effects of our collective wrong-doing. Not from the mouth of Socrates, but from the relentless response of nature—including human nature—are the most emphatic warnings coming. And there are among us at least a few who give expression to Promethean vision, who are able to point out, as Norman Cousins and others point out, the effects on ourselves of what we are doing. The project to which they invite is learning the laws of life—of intelligent life—as thoroughly as we have learned the laws of matter and motion.

REVIEW
FLIRTING WITH VIOLENCE

WHAT causes violence between humans and how is it stopped? Without bothering to investigate "territorial imperatives" or the matter of hostile versus altruistic genes—which inevitably gets us into animal psychology, despite the fact that animals don't fight wars—we turn to a new book on the subject, *America without Violence* by Michael N. Nagler, who teaches classics and comparative literature at the University of California in Berkeley. The publisher is Island Press, Star Route 1, Box 38, Covelo, Calif. 95428, and the price is $8.00. Early in his book, Prof. Nagler quotes a study by Dr. Donald Lunde.

> In comparing a type of sadistic homicide with the collective injustices sometimes perpetrated by political states—the one a recognized crime, the other by some standards within the law—he finds that in both cases the perpetrators of these acts dehumanize their intended victims and look on them not as people but as inanimate objects. To the murderers, "the victims may be viewed as 'life-sized dolls' rather than as fellow human beings," while in collective, political violence, "the victims may be perceived as 'enemies of the state' . . . or some kind of faceless inhuman objects."
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> "Alienation," writes Professor [Kenneth] Boulding, "is an important source of violence." Boulding continues:
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> "International war is only possible because the enemy is defined as a foreigner and not a member of the society. . . . In internal war, likewise, alienation is of great importance. The Irish Republican Army people who plant bombs which kill the innocent could only do so if they were deeply alienated not only from their own society but in a sense from all society. *If they ever thought of their victims as real people,* one doubts whether they could bring themselves to these acts. Fortunately, in most human beings, alienation rarely rises to this level."

Prof. Nagler comments:

> In practical terms, then, we can examine any solution proposed to a problem of violence according to the question Does this help to decrease alienation? If it does not, the "solution" may be serviceable as a temporary stopgap, but it is no solution. If it actually increases alienation, as many contemporary measures do, the remedy is only going, in the long run, to exacerbate the malady.

An example is the death penalty in criminal law. "Why," its opponents ask, "do we kill people who kill people to show that killing is wrong?" Meanwhile violence steadily increases:

> For example, late in 1980 many newspapers carried a report of the rise in crime across the nation for the preceding year: 12.1 million reported crimes (or one every three seconds, and this may be only half the crimes that actually occur); a 9 per cent increase in reported crime of all kinds over 1978, and for violent crimes 11 per cent. It was enough, pointed out the *San Francisco Chronicle*, to mean that one of every four Americans will be beaten, robbed, or raped every ten years if the trend goes unchecked.

How can the trend be stopped? One authority said we have a choice between tougher police methods, "behavior modification" in prisons, using drugs and psychosurgery, or finally, "a shift in the social fabric to bring about a recovery of the family and the restoration of the educational system." Concealed in this reference to "the social fabric" is the only real solution, but what does it mean? It means, Prof. Nagler says, getting rid of alienation. Involved would be "shifting values from competition to cooperation, from vindictiveness to compassion, and in other ways such as recovering family life and giving meaning to education." The author shows that the common practice is more or less opposite to these remedies.

"Alienation" is said to be the flaw in our common life, the underlying cause of violence. What does the word mean? The dictionary says that to alienate is "To make inimical or indifferent where devotion or attachment formerly existed."

If we take this diagnosis seriously, it means altering almost wholly what is often termed the "American way of life." It means getting rid of the national state, it means building community instead of private fortunes by ruthlessly acquisitive means, and it means adopting, slowly but surely, something of the Quaker conviction that there is "that of God in every man." While he does not list these remedies bluntly as we have here, Prof. Nagler devotes his book to discussing such means, showing that they *work*, however imperfectly and inadequately, and giving examples from history.

The "cultural" influences leading to violence, to which we casually subject ourselves and our children, have attention:

> What is shocking is that almost all of us are flirting with violence in some degree. Most murder mysteries in fact present comparatively mild forms of it. But ever since Alfred Hitchcock released his classic thriller *Psycho* in the

summer of 1960 and three young men committed murders in close imitation of the film (one of them murdering his own grandmother), we have been steadily sliding into the present era of "ultra-violence." As the detail and brutality of the violence presented slowly escalated—the technicolor, the slow motion, the heightened realism—we prepared ourselves for the phenomenon of the gang warfare film. When *Boulevard Nights* and *The Warriors* were released in 1979, members of the audience were so aroused that they started shooting in the theater. Eight people were killed at these films, five wounded, and the response was classic "downstream": The distributor provides a security guard at every showing, and non-gang members are advised to remain outside the line of fire during the performance. . . . President Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia seems likewise to have been prompted by his repeated viewings of the movie *Patton.*

Films seen in theaters are probably the second most influential medium through which acts of violence are encouraged or precipitated. Television is undoubtedly the first. In a survey of prison inmates, for example, reported by Nicholas Johnson, Chairman of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, "ninety per cent said they had improved their criminal talents by watching TV and forty per cent had actually attempted crimes they first saw on TV."

Not only popular entertainment, but what is termed serious literature must be called to account. In *The Need for Roots,* Simone Weil held Andre Gide responsible for the meaningless murders which followed publication of one of his novels (*Caves du Vatican*). Jessamyn West (*Redbook* for January, 1963) wrote penetratingly of the effect of TV programs on children:

. . . today there exists a conspiracy of double talk—a conspiracy to dehumanize the victims and whitewash the process by which they are erased. Death on the screen is so easy a matter. The fast draw, the quick collapse. We are never permitted to see very much of the man who is going to die. We must learn not to care for him, to feel that his death matters; otherwise our enjoyment of his violent end will be weakened. We must never see him as a fellow who planted radishes, made kites for his kids or patted a dog on the head. . . . There are many intelligent thoughtful people who believe that there is too much violence on our movie and television screens and that it is particularly bad for children to see it. But what is really wrong is that the children do not see it. They see only the pleasure of landing the blow without ever imagining the pain of receiving it, without even imagining that the one who receives the blow is capable of suffering pain.

The TV screen wherein only bad men die, and then neatly and with dispatch, dull and kills the imagination—and whatever destroys the imagination limits and ultimately destroys man.

What makes people change—get over their alienation—adopt a view of themselves and others which leads to the actual practice of brotherhood? Toward the end of his book Prof. Nagler quotes from one man who, an MIT graduate, was working on missile systems. He said:

It wasn't at all clear cut, how I first started to feel that there was something wrong. It had something to do with sitting around at engineers' meetings where everyone was eating sandwiches and matter-of-factly talking about the best way to destroy a city. It was all very creative, with people shooting out ideas—the advantages of multiple warheads over patterned rockets.

I don't think anyone else was inclined the way I was. In fact, when I tried to tell people close to me that I wanted to get out of the field they were very upset—uprooted.

Well, he got out—uprooted himself—and became a specialist in experimental medicine. "You learn physiology but you don't forget engineering—you put it all together and come out with something you can *use*, something that really makes sense for people's welfare."

You know, when I was back at MIT we studied "control systems." Nobody told us they could be used to guide rockets loaded with nuclear warheads; nobody ever asked us to think about what we were doing.

This is the sort of thinking covered by the innocuous phrase, "shift in the social fabric." What is really called for is the world turned upside down. Or right side up.

It might be a good idea to send to the War Resisters International (55 Dawes St., London, SE17, U.K.), for a copy of the XVII Triennial *Background Papers.* Prof. Nagler's book gives an over-all view of working for peace; WRI members and writers tell what is going on now, in Europe and elsewhere, in the struggle against war by committed individuals.

COMMENTARY
LIKE THE SIGN SAYS

THE degradation of language—spoken of (in the lead article) by Emerson, Schlesinger, and Norman Cousins—is a symptom as well as an ill. Other things are going downhill. The fabric of culture grows brittle and turns into dust. Yet there are preservers, some of whom are colorfully described in a new book—*The Magpie's Bagpipe* (Northpoint Press). The author, Jonathan Williams, tells about a time when he was in Florida, looking for the home for his last years built by Frederick Delius, the English composer who died in 1934. It seems that Jacksonville University had decided to move Delius's residence near the campus, and Williams and a companion wanted to have a look at it. Driving along, they asked the way of a few white people who lived in the sparsely settled area, but none of them had heard of Delius. Then they stopped at a turpentine camp where black men were working and asked the same questions:

> Hello, we're looking for a cabin that got moved into town somewhat lately, that used to belong to a man from England who wrote music. One of the men looked at me coolly and said, you mean Frederick Delius's plantation, Solano Grove, it's been moved to the campus of Jacksonville University. I said, gulp, yes. An older man then said, with equal clarity and poise, it's a shame, the people that used to come out here from Europe and New York would be terribly disappointed at what's happened. You know it's only been moved so they can make some money out of the tourists. . . . This man was an autocrat. His features and color suggested a Seminole strain. . . . We talked on for fifteen minutes or twenty minutes about a variety of things and each of the men employed a rich, exact vocabulary with a sophistication simply a world apart and ahead of what I had encountered earlier from three resident crackers. Yet the senior of the two spoke of lacking formal education after the third grade.

A culture is surviving, but not in the University. As Williams says:

> Meantime Jacksonville University has Delius's Solano Grove. . . . "This property was practically inaccessible as a Shrine," claims the University. By which it means there isn't a Howard Johnson within forty-five minutes. Well, let's get on with it. The final chorale of *Appalachia* should now read: "O Honey, we are going down the drain pipe in the morning." Like the sign says, You are now entering fabulous Florida.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

IT is increasingly evident that Bioregionalism is an idea whose time is coming. Its possibilities ought to be part of any social science teaching, and for initial material the contents of the August-September issue of Rain (2270 NW Irving, Portland, Oregon 92710) are of substantial value. The featured story is "Manifesting Regional Destiny," an interview with William Appleman Williams, the contemporary historian who for years has been suggesting that we take another look at the scorned Articles of Confederation, which were soon replaced by our present Constitution. (Key people to look up on this subject would include the brothers Howard and Eugene Odum, and their father, Eugene Odum, who wrote what may have been the first book on the natural regions of the U.S., back in the 1930s; and the work of Joel Schatz also deserves attention.)

Only regionalism, Williams thinks, makes socio-economic sense. A move in this direction, he suggests, may come in Canada, and not only in terms of Quebec's separatism.

> The Canadians are having many problems like ours, because, like ours, their economics run north-south rather than east-west. British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest are integral parts of one another. Manitoba and Saskatchewan make more sense being part of an economic region including the Dakotas and Montana than they do tied to Toronto.
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> If there is anything approaching secession in Canada, I would not be surprised to see it come out of the western provinces. They have a tradition of being ignored by the central government, and they have a lot of resources to work with.

Asked if there is any emerging regional consciousness in the U.S., Williams said:

> Certainly the resistance in the High Plains and Rockies to strip mining, the MX missiles and that kind of nonsense bespeaks a determination to stand up and say, "Enough is enough."
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> You can talk about emerging regionalism to some extent in the southern part of the old South—the Gulf Coast Reach, Georgia, Alabama. That's a curious kind of self-consciousness, but it exists. They see themselves as different from the rest of what we speak of loosely as the South.
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> Every once in a while, I think we are developing an integrated regional consciousness in the Pacific Northwest but then it seems to peter out. You get a lot of it periodically when the Californians and the Southwest say they are going to get our water whether we like it or not. But that is a pretty negative basis of unity, and I'm sure the Canadians would stop any such plan because most of it is their water. . .
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> You have to start out with local politics and then state politics. If in the course of that you build a strong power base in local communities and states, you can create regional structures. As regional communities get more confidence and experience, they might devolve some of their responsibilities.
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> But you have to create the region first. . . .

Among the books on Bioregions noted in *Rain* is Joel Garreau's *The Nine Nations of North America* (Houghton Mifflin), which proposes, the reviewer says, "that North America is really nine nations, each with its own identity." The realities of these regions are said to endlessly confuse the affairs of "fictional nations" such as the U.S.A., Canada, and Mexico. Two concluding paragraphs of the review:

> In the chapter on MexAmerica (northern Mexico plus parts of the American Southwest where Hispanics are a large portion of the population), the author makes a fascinating reference to a Hispanic belief that this land will one day be a place of peace and justice called Aztlan. May it soon come to pass.
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> *The Nine Nations of North America* helps build an understanding of this continent as one of distinct regions, not a monoculture. But it is oversimplified and does not address many of the most important issues facing the continent. *The Nine Nations* is a good try at forming an important concept, but the book that really tells us how North America works is still to be written.

We go back to William Appleman Williams' sentence, "But you have to create the region first," by which he means, the region may be there, but people need to begin thinking about their lives, interests, and concerns in terms of their region. A

fine sample of such thinking in the Pacific Northwest is to be found in *Tilth*, quarterly journal of the Tilth Association, 13217 Mattson Road, Arlington, Wash. 98223 (membership and subscription $10 a year). *Tilth* has just published a book, *The Future Is Abundant: A Guide to Sustainable Agriculture* ($11.95). The foreword begins:

> *The Future Is Abundant* is a guide to creating a sustainable agriculture in the Pacific Northwest. Although set in one small corner of North America, we see this work as part of a planetary movement, and thus as a model for other regions. This book is part of a global effort to enhance and sustain the world's resources and make them available to all people.
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> *The Future Is Abundant* is a sourcebook, not a blueprint. In it we sketch the elements and principles of a sustainable agriculture. We provide references to books, periodicals, organizations, and resource people to guide you in your own research. The Plant Species Index describes the characteristics of over 300 useful species, and the Seed and Nursery list tells where these plants, and many others, can be obtained.

The Glossary at the back of the book provides this definition: "Bioregion: an area with unique interlocking webs of life that are distinguishable from those of neighboring regions. The geographical area of a bioregion is often defined by watersheds."

We take note of a book like this, not only because some readers will want to acquire it, but also as evidence of the growing focus of thinking on the burgeoning new science of agriculture—collaborative instead of exploitive agriculture—and the communitarian and regional spirit it fosters and develops. This is indeed the way "regions" come to self-consciousness. Some day we shall all be people of the regions of the earth instead of "nations," and the sterile intricacies of power politics will be replaced by the living complexities of an organic culture. Journals and books are the bloodstream of this transforming development.

Another such book (developed on a wider canvas) is *Intensive Food Production on a Human Scale*, edited by Hugh J. Roberts, sponsored by VIISA (Volunteers in International Service and Awareness, Santa Barbara, Calif.), and published by Ecology Action, 25 E1 Camino Real, Palo Alto, Calif. 94306, at $7.50. The contents are the proceedings of the Third International Conference on Small Scale Intensive Food Production, held a year ago in Santa Barbara. The speakers provided reports on current small-scale food production around the world. Chinese agronomists described developments in mainland China, and others told of similar work done in Indonesia, India, Hawaii, Thailand, Chile, New Guinea, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, and Canada. The keynote address was by I. Garth Youngberg, U.S. Department of Agriculture Organic Farming Coordinator, who made it clear that the Department has begun to take seriously the performance and promise of organic agriculture, as evidenced by the 1980 USDA Report, drawn up after extensive investigations (sixty-nine on-farm case studies). John Jeavons of Ecology Action reported on progress in big-intensive food raising during the past years, saying: "Our estimate is that over half a million new individuals in 60 different countries have started using this food-raising approach since." Asked about the future, Jeavons said:

> Mini-farming is new, the growing edge, just beginning. I think that it's going to take longer [than organic farming] to get started. We hope that our new site [Ecology Action's land recently acquired in Willits, Calif.] will be established and operating cost-effectively within three years, and I'm sure we can do that. I think that one of the best potentials is in the Third World countries. When we visited Mexico we found out that the average income of 50% of the families is $600 a year, yet food prices are the same as in the United States or higher; so, an economic mini-farm in Mexico would have six times the economic leverage of one in the United States. I think as resource costs become greater, we'll see much more economic leverage in the United States as well.

One needs to read or at least look through such books to become convinced of the vitality of these undertakings. They are mind-forming as well as food-growing.

FRONTIERS

Warnings and Encouragements

LEARNING from nature is the principle, the slogan, the practice of a generation now in its prime, and while its numbers may be few in comparison to general population figures, its various achievements may embody the only hope of a future for the human race. The efforts of these people are regularly reported here. Before them came the pioneers, men such as Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, and John Muir. Then there were John Wesley Powell and Aldo Leopold. We lost one of the pioneers, in the death of Richard St. Barbe Baker, who died last June in Saskatoon, Canada, at the age of ninety-two. Both pacifist and vegetarian, Dr. Baker was widely known as the "Man of the Trees," and is said to have been responsible, through his work, for the planting of over 26 trillion trees throughout the world. He founded an organization, Men of the Trees, in Kenya in 1922, and his first book, published in 1931, had that title. His autobiography, *My Life, My Trees*, was published in 1970, with another edition in 1979. He wrote some thirty books in all, and extracts from two of them, *Green Glory: The Forests of the World*, and *Dance of the Trees*, are given in Ecology Action's eighth "Working Paper" of the Self-Teaching Mini-Series (25 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, Calif. 94306). There is this from *Green Glory:*

> From the kindly darkness of the earth, where germination takes place, the shoot and root progress in opposite directions, the former drawn toward the light, the latter digging into Mother Earth for sustenance. The root explores for moisture and sends out little branch roots in search of food, which stimulates the upward growth. The shoot in its turn sends out branches, and through the activity of the cambium, or growing layer, the stem thickens. Supplied with a few mineral salts, water, and air, the tree builds it body, increasing in size as year by year it adds layers of tissue to its growth. The essential chemical processes continue under the influence of sunlight, and, by reason of its unique power of utilizing radiant energy from the sun, the tree obtains carbon for the manufacture of carbohydrates and proteins. . . .
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> The root tips are provided with remarkable osmotic apparatus for the purpose of taking up water and mineral food from the soil. . . . The water, drawn from the depths of the earth, continues to rise by osmotic pressure unchecked through each breathing cell and sieve tube, by way of the growing layer, until it reaches the topmost leaves of the tree. After circulating in the leaves and giving of itself, it absorbs valuable ingredients from the air and returns once more to the depths of the roots, having built up the xylem, or new wood. . . . How dependent we are upon trees has yet to be fully realized. Only in a vague sort of way can we assess the real contribution that trees make to human existence on this planet. Their functions are legion and their life is interwoven with earth. To the trees we owe the quality of our food, the quantity of our water, and the purity of the very air we breathe.

The influence of Richard St. Barbe Baker can hardly be measured. His intervention in the 1930s and again in the 1970s had much to do with saving the redwoods on the West Coast of the United States, and his personal meeting with the newly elected Franklin D. Roosevelt led to the formation of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Roosevelt signed the law for its creation within a month of taking office, and within another month the first conservation camp was started. As the Ecology Action Paper says: "In its nine years of existence, the Civilian Conservation Corps contributed some 730,000 man-years of work in forest protection, in construction and maintenance of improvements on public forests, in tree planting, and in timberstand improvements!"

In his later years Dr. Baker continually warned of the disaster that would result from stripping the planet of trees. He also said that the spread of deserts could be stopped by a "green wall" of trees. Hearing this, an Englishwoman working for a timber concern in 1958 in Corsica took her savings, bought a ticket to Morocco and planted trees there, which four years later were twelve feet high, with food crops growing in their shelter. Then she was allowed to plant a thousand seedlings on a French military dump in Algeria.

They lived, and the Algerian government encouraged her to supervise planting more trees at Bou Saada, with the result that by 1970, 130,000 trees were established on 260 acres, creating a climate for growing grain, fruit trees, and vegetables. Wendy Campbell-Purdie is now setting out for Greece where she plans to establish a Tree Crops demonstration and research center on arid land (the London headquarters of the Tree Crops Trust is 84, St. Paul's Road, London No. 1, U.K.).

In *Dance of Trees* (1956) Dr. Baker wrote:

> As we look at the world today, we see many parts that have been denuded of tree cover. During this past century we have bitten deeper into the natural resources of the earth than all former generations of mankind. We have upset the water cycle by removing the tree cover. As we have no proof to the contrary, it might be as well to accept this point of view and act accordingly.
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> Modern techniques have speeded up the process of destruction. It took about fifteen hundred years for the Arabs to make the Sahara desert. In the United States it [took] only about forty-four years to form the Dust Bowl which [spread] very rapidly. The "improved" ploughs driven by tractors at high speed have accelerated erosion. . .
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> The time has surely come to win back the areas that have been lost. The weapon in this great work of reclamation is the tree. The tree not only protects the soil and keeps the water in circulation but itself provides shelter, food and fuel. . . . A man who plants a tree is doing a very wonderful thing. He is setting in motion an organism which may far outlive him or his children and year by year that tree is storing up energy and power, working with precision like a factory, but far superior to any factory of man.

The *Ecologist* for January-February has a grim report on what is happening to the rainforests of the Amazon Basin, in Borneo and other areas, where deforestation by lumbering interests and cattle ranchers and related invasions (highways) will mean elimination of these forests—called "the lungs of the world"—within twenty or thirty years. At the end of the report, which is detailed (with 110 footnotes), the writers explain the devastation going on in these less developed regions as not only the result of "the dominance of the short-term interests of a powerful elite," but also an expression of "the contemporary human *hubris* concerning the natural order."

Meanwhile, in encouraging contrast to these apparently irreversible tendencies, there is the ongoing campaign of the TreePeople in the Los Angeles area to plant one million trees in urban neighborhoods by 1984. TreePeople staff and volunteers are encouraging "people to work with their neighbors to plant trees in the community around their homes and businesses." Progress in this undertaking is reported in *Seedling News*, available from California Conservation Project, 12601 Mulholland Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210.