

THE RHETORIC OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

ALTHOUGH history may not be a faultless guide to origins, what human beings have done throughout their knowable past may be taken as evidence of something fundamental in their nature; and we propose, here, that the primary communication of humans to one another has always been concerned with definition of the good. Definition of what is right and good goes beyond declarative announcement. It also affirms a preference and implies a choice. Without this choice the definition would be meaningless. Thought, too, would be meaningless, since thinking is the means by which humans decide between one thing and another. Since thinking is the defining characteristic of human beings, it follows that pursuit of what is right and good is their natural activity, by which their behavior is to be explained and understood.

Literature, then, is a body of persuasion. This, so far as communication is concerned, is probably the origin of evil. Yet in order to be the origin of evil, it must also be the origin of good. Communication is an art of classification. It arranges ideas and acts in an ascending structure of approaches to the good, and thereby may make serious mistakes. One man's meat, we say, is another man's poison. How, then, can righteous action be defined? The thing is impossible, observant individuals say, after reviewing the evil produced by the enforcement of moral codes. Yet others say, with perhaps equal reason, from experience, that moral codes for the guidance of human behavior are absolutely indispensable. In the ensuing argument, the rhetoric of righteousness appears.

An extreme example of the rhetoric of righteousness is available in the formidable volume, *Malleus Maleficarum* (1489), the handbook of inquisitors, commonly rendered as "Hammer of Witches," by James Sprenger and

Henry Kramer. This work gained its authority from an Apostolic Bull issued by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 in which he empowered these two inquisitors to proceed against all those suspected of either heresy or witchcraft—offenses which had become virtually indistinguishable—and threatened all those who should interfere with their labors with condign punishment. The development of this policy was a slow evolution, as a reading of the *Britannica* (11th edition) article on the subject will show. But severe punishments and even burnings began in the eleventh century, spread in the twelfth, and in the thirteenth there were massacres of whole communities of unconverted Jews in Spain, where the Reformation had had little effect. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, mystics of every description were ruthlessly persecuted in Germany and France, and in Spain even St. Theresa was threatened by the taint of heresy found in one of her books, and she was saved by the personal influence of Philip II. In the sixteenth century followers of Erasmus came under the ban. In those years, the *Britannica* writer says, "Countless numbers of obscure visionaries, devotees both men and women, clerks and laymen, were accused of illuminism and perished in the fires of dungeons or the Inquisition."

This record of what amounted to systematic murder, torture, and incredible cruelty, in the name of religion, over hundreds of years, along with notorious corruption and aggressive self-interest on the part of the powerful clergy, was a major factor in explaining the rampant materialism that finally became explicit in the eighteenth century. With the expectation of being understood by at least an informed minority, the French thinker Lamettrie declared in his shocking and hated but widely influential book, *Man a Machine* (1748), that the world "would never be

happy unless it was atheistic." The reason was given:

If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars; there would no longer be soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature, which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. Deaf to all other voices, men would follow their own individual impulses, and these impulses alone can lead them to happiness along the pleasant path of virtue.

It is difficult to find in world history a parallel of the corruption and misuse of religion which took place in Europe from, say, the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. The psychological tyranny of the Brahmins of India, which finally led to the reform inaugurated by Gautama Buddha, was bad enough, but there was no comparable cruelty or bloodshed in their sacerdotal regime, and no similar anti-religious reaction. The obvious links between the powers of church and state in Europe generated the deep distrust and resentment which gave the French Revolution its militant rejection of both king and priest, with corresponding justifications from the *philosophes*. The spirit of the American Revolution was by contrast unfrenzied and supported by the reason of the best men of the time, although the persuasions of the French thinkers were doubtless responsible for the fact that, as noted by Harry Elmer Barnes, "the majority of distinguished Americans in the generation of the Fathers were not even professing Christians."

Science, as we know, rose in the nineteenth century to almost all-powerful intellectual authority, outside the sphere of established religion (although some individual scientists, as in the earlier case of Newton, were far from being irreligious), and by the early years of the twentieth century the implication of scientific inquiry—"matter" is all there is—had become the foundation of virtually all serious thinking. It is still the habit of a great many educated people. There were, however, some notable exceptions, individuals who saw that the abolition of the

intellectual authority of religion had gradually created a society which no longer had a rational foundation for any sort of moral restraint.

In 1929 Joseph Wood Krutch published *The Modern Temper* in which he explored the cultural and philosophical impact of this great change. Years later, in his preface to another edition of this work (1956), he gave a summary of what seemed to him the moral crisis with which he had dealt:

The universe revealed by science, especially the sciences of biology and psychology, is one in which the human spirit cannot find a comfortable home. That spirit breathes freely only in a universe where what philosophers call Value Judgments are of supreme importance. It needs to believe, for instance that right and wrong are real, that Love is more than a biological function, that the human mind is capable of reason rather than merely of rationalization, and that it has the power to will and to choose instead of being compelled merely to react in the fashion predetermined by its conditioning. Since science has proved that none of these beliefs is more than a delusion, mankind will be compelled either to surrender what we call its humanity by adjusting to the real world or to live some kind of tragic existence in a universe alien to the deepest needs of its nature.

Most of the political and military events which have shaken our world took place after 1929. I cannot claim to have prophesied them in detail, and what many believe to be the downfall of our civilization sometimes seems to be approaching faster than I thought. . . .

More than a quarter of a century later I find myself asking three questions: (1) Do educated people continue to believe that science has exposed as delusions those convictions and standards upon which Western civilization was founded? (2) Is the ultimate cause of the catastrophe with which that civilization is threatened this loss of faith in humanity itself? (3) Is it really true, as I once believed, that there is no escaping the scientific demonstration that religion, morality, and the human being's power to make free choices are all merely figments of the imagination?

These were views to which, in 1929, Krutch could find no alternative. In his mature years, in 1956, he still accepted the first two statements, but had found reason, given in another book, *The*

Measure of Man, "for no longer believing that the mechanistic, materialistic, and deterministic conclusions of science do have to be accepted as fact and hence as the premises upon which any philosophy of life or any estimate of man and his future must be based." In short, before he died, Krutch reached a more optimistic view, while still maintaining the diagnosis suggested by his first two questions. We shall not pursue here the grounds for his optimism; the book he names is the place to look for that; we have quoted him because he sets so clearly what seems the essential problem that we all have to recognize and begin to find a solution for.

How should or might one begin? There are, no doubt, dozens of ways to begin. Here we should like to take into account what seems an outstanding fact of human thought and behavior. This will underline Krutch's first statement that the human spirit breathes freely only in a universe where Value Judgments are of supreme importance. The fact is that we are all innately, spontaneously, and inevitably, moralists. Given a set of facts or circumstances, we remain uneasy or dissatisfied until we take the stance of moral judgment and reach a verdict. Evident injustice brings the response of moral outrage. A list of people charged with calculated wrong-doing is the easiest way to excite people's moral emotions and rise to political power on the wave of their indignant support, as Senator McCarthy discovered and made the basis of his political career. The present foreign policy of the United States is founded on this reality of human nature, the claim that we have no other motive than the repression and control of the "bad" people in the world and the support of those who share our views of righteousness.

All this reveals the various uses of the rhetoric of righteousness. Yet there is also righteousness of a sort that exposes and condemns the political exploitation of the moral emotions. The address by the Mexican writer, Carlos Fuentes, at the Harvard commencement in 1983, a

lofty and penetrating critical analysis of American intervention in Latin America, depends for its strength on the moral perception of the reader. One must conclude, then, that the issue is not the elimination of moral righteousness, but its clarification. The rhetoric of *moralizing* righteousness is the offender: How can this instrument of persuasion be cleansed of deliberate manipulation in behalf of conscious or unconscious self-interest?

The oldest and simplest answer to this question is the one given by the Buddhas and Christs of history—get rid of self-interest. That, they maintained, is our only hope of seeing clearly the difference between right and wrong. Custom and law endorse this recommendation in a limited way. Critical attacks on public servants are commonly based on the charge of self-interest behind their policy decisions, placing personal good above public service. Judges often disqualify themselves when cases are brought before them in which they may be accused of having a partisan interest in one side or the other of the dispute.

But, on the other hand, self-interest, as Adam Smith instructed us, is held to be the engine of economic progress and the foundation of prosperity. We permit and practice particularized forms of self-interest, under the regulation of custom—"business as usual" and within the limits of extremes, developing elaborate theories intended to show that by this means the common good is served. After Darwin, Huxley, and Herbert Spencer had had their say, self-interest acquired the prestige of a law of Nature; its defense became a natural piety as well as a practical matter, making "free enterprise" the true practice of the American religion. One hardly need point out that spokesmen for the poor and the "working classes" soon developed a counter ideology, also said to be based on natural law, claiming that *scientific* socialism is the only possible answer to the manifold problems arising from the struggle for existence. This great socio-

political argument is still going on, although the contradictions evident in almost every phase of the debate, along with worsening conditions and the naked hypocrisies of national policies, are slowly turning the debate into a contest of tired and hardly believable moral clichés.

The scientific remedy—get rid of morality entirely, all we need is scientific facts—has not worked. Morality could not be eliminated, but only disguised. Michael Polanyi provided an apt summary of the situation in *The Tacit Dimension*:

Scientific detachment . . . presents us with a world of bare facts. There is nothing there to justify authority or tradition. These facts are there; for the rest, man's choice is unrestricted. You might expect moral perfectionism to be shocked by this teaching. But no, it rejoices in it. For modern existentialism used moral skepticism to blast the morality of the existing society as artificial, ideological, hypocritical.

Moral skepticism and moral perfectionism thus combine to discredit all explicit expressions of morality. We have, then, moral passions filled with contempt for their own ideals. And once they shun their own ideals, moral passions can express themselves only in anti-moralism. . . . The unprecedented critical lucidity of modern man is fused here with his equally unprecedented moral demands and produces an angry absolute individualism. But adjacent to this, the same fusion produces political teachings which sanction the total suppression of the individual. Scientific skepticism and moral perfectionism join forces then in a movement denouncing any appeal to moral ideals as futile and dishonest. Its perfectionism demands a total transformation of society; but this utopian project is not allowed to declare itself. It conceals its moral motives by embodying them in a struggle for power, believed to bring about automatically the aims of utopia. It blindly accepts for this belief the scientific testimony of Marxism. Marxism embodies the boundless moral aspirations of modern man in a theory which protects his ideals from skeptical doubt by denying the moral motives in public life. The power of Marxism lies in uniting the two contradictory forces of the modern mind into a single political doctrine. Thus originated a world-embracing idea, in which moral doubt is frenzied by moral fury and moral fury is armed by scientific nihilism.

Modern materialists of this persuasion have little difficulty in discrediting the moral pretensions of the "free" societies by pointing to the demonstrable hypocrisy of their diplomatic claims and representations. Only the functioning freedom of speech and of the press in the West remains as evidence of its genuine public morality. Fundamental distrust of states and their moral justifications is becoming a leading characteristic of the intelligent members of both societies, East and West, but only in the West does it have explicit expression. One result of this growing attitude has been the gradual revival of interest in anarchist teachings, growing attention to Gandhi, and a renewal of the ideas of Henry David Thoreau.

One might say that, in contrast to the florid style of nineteenth-century writing, often showily moralistic, the best essayists of the twentieth century are terse and impersonal, avoiding the methods of superficial and easy persuasion. This seems an almost instinctive—although doubtless also deliberate—rejection of the rhetoric of righteousness. The moral conclusion, as for example in Ortega, is left to the reader. The purpose of his rhetoric is to stir the thinking of the reader, not to draw it to some conclusion. This spirit emerges in various ways. The Gandhian leaders have their way of giving it expression. In an article on Vinoba in the November-December 1983 issue of *Gandhi Marg*, Geoffrey Ostergaard takes note of what he regards as this "anarchist" aspect of Vinoba's idea of truth and his relations with others:

Vinoba was no "Gandhian" in the sense of someone who invokes the name and thereby the authority of Gandhi to justify his own action. Like Gandhi, Vinoba searched for Truth, and it was Truth, not any particular person's relative version of it, which carried the stamp of authority. Vinoba was thus always his own man. He learned much from Gandhi and also others, notably Shankaracharya and Jnaneshwar, but he took from them only those ideas that appealed to him, leaving aside those that did not. Those ideas which he took, he imbibed so that they became in effect his own. Hence, as he put it, "I am a

man of my own ideas." The implication—clearly an anarchistic one—was that others should do likewise, *even with regard to Vinoba's ideas*. "I will rejoice," he once said, "if a person refuses to act on my advice because he does not approve of it. If, however, he acts on it without understanding it, I will be sad." People, he believed, should not submit even to moral authority without thinking the matter out for themselves: "I don't want you to accept what I say without understanding it. . . . Take my ideas only, if you approve of them."

This spirit was of course fundamental to Socratic persuasion, as found, for example, in the *Gorgias*, and is at the foundation of all genuine effort at education. Could we have a public life which refuses to use the clichés of moral tradition, abandons the rhetoric of righteousness, and depends on the actual thinking of the people for the ordering of society? Could a good man ever get elected to office if he made this rule the basis of his campaign? What would happen to education without any indoctrination? A certain chaos would probably result if this policy were adopted by a mass society. The fact is that only reasonably small groups are suitable for the cooperative generation of real thinking. Where, in short, have the slogans and popular assumptions which we have followed for a century or two, led us?

We started out this discussion by suggesting that moral judgment is part of the essential fabric of being human, that inevitably we seek answers to questions of right and wrong, good and evil. It seems that this quality is both our strength and our weakness. Careless or over-simplified moral judgment seems at the root of the most terrible things we do. And in *Studies in Words* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), C. S. Lewis shows that the intellectual life of a culture may be eventually betrayed, its thought trivialized, by this inevitable tendency. He says:

Verbicide, the murder of a word, happens in many ways. Inflation is one of the commonest; those who taught us to say *awfully* for "very," *tremendous* for "great," *sadism* for "cruelty," and *unthinkable* for "undesirable" were verbicides. . . . But the greatest cause of verbicide is the fact that most people are

obviously far more anxious to express their approval and disapproval of things than to describe them. Hence the tendency of words to become less descriptive and more evaluative, while still retaining some hint of the sort of goodness or badness implied; and to end up by being purely evaluative—useless synonyms for *good* or for *bad*.

Yet the language which is wholly without evaluation (except in the case of technical books) shrivels our minds and impoverishes our lives. History suggests that we can't live with morality without being led into intolerable excesses, yet common sense, and some history, too, indicates that the moral sense is the core of our being, from which have come what few blessings we possess and still enjoy. What, then, are the modes of moral self-education that are likely to be acceptable in these closing years of the twentieth century? The question is a fateful one.

REVIEW

TRIGANT BURROW

IN 1949, reviewing Trigant Burrow's *The Neurosis of Man*, Herbert Read, an unqualified admirer of Burrow's work, wrote that for more than twenty years "I have never been able to understand why, in his own country, he has not received the recognition due to one of the greatest psychologists of our time." Yet the explanation is not difficult to provide. While he admired Freud and had studied with Jung, as a practicing psychoanalyst in Baltimore Burrow struck out on his own, declaring that neurosis is a *social* ill afflicting more or less everyone, the remedy for which could be nothing less than a deliberate remaking of our responses to experience. We must all, he said, recognize the solidarity of our species—admit and practice the brotherhood of man—and stop the almost automatic pursuit of self-interest. Burrow began pointing out in 1914 that, in the words of his biographer, "society at large embodies the neurotic elements Freud had identified in individual patients." He said:

The policy that leads to the neurotic's self-imposed ostracism differs only in degree from the policy of the community. For society is hysterical, too. Society has its elaborate system of defense mechanisms, its equivocations and metonymies, its infantile makeshifts and illusions. The difference is that society's counterfeits possess the advantage of universal currency, and so the record of its frailties is set down under the name of custom rather than of pathology.

This quotation is taken from Alfreda Galt's foreword to selections from Burrow's writings (six books and dozens of papers) published this year by Horizon Press, \$15.95) under the title *Toward Social Sanity*. Mrs. Galt has had a lifetime of experience in working with Burrow's ideas, having been since girlhood a member of the experimental research group he gathered around him. She intended the book to be a comparatively brief summary or survey of his principal ideas, edited for continuity of development, and it became exactly that, with the vitality of his own words.

Who was this almost forgotten man of psychology? He was born in 1875 and died in 1950. He got his medical degree at the University of Virginia and received his doctorate in experimental psychology from Johns Hopkins. He met Freud and Jung when they came to the United States in 1909, before the rift developed between them, and spent a winter in Zurich studying with the latter. His primary allegiance, Mrs. Galt says, remained with Freud. Yet when Freud learned of Burrow's effort to show that individual psychological disorders could be traced to stereotyped social attitudes, he asked: "Does Burrow think he is going to cure the world?"

Burrow's answer, in effect, was "Yes." "Only the phyllic neurosis, only the neurosis of man, can be cured," he said, and set about the research he regarded as necessary for a scientific remedy. The breadth and depth of his theory were such that it could not be popular or be taken up by other members of his profession, save for a handful of colleagues. This is the answer to Read's question. The same question was asked by Nathan Ackerman in a foreword to one of Burrow's posthumous books (*Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience*, 1964), but he also gave an answer:

How could this giant figure have remained so obscure, and for so many years? . . . Burrow, dismissed from his university appointment, excommunicated from the American Psychoanalytical Association, and then a virtual taboo placed on his name? Burrow, a dedicated researcher in human behavior, tossed into scientific exile! Was this some peculiar quirk, an odd accident of history? This could hardly be. I could explain it in only one way.

A generation ago, Burrow's theories were far in advance of his time. They were too radical, too threatening to conventional systems of thought. By Burrow's own admission, even he felt inwardly threatened by his discoveries concerning the pathology of normality—his ideas must have been felt a danger to the then-popular concepts of psychiatry and psychoanalysis. . . . The implications of his theories for a revolution in established social forms were possibly such as to impel what amounted to

mass avoidance, an unconscious complicity in protest and denial.

There may be subtler reasons as well. The reader of Mrs. Galt's book, and of Burrow's letters, begins to feel the underlying goodwill and concern in Burrow for all humans, and a little of the sense of mission that came to animate all that he did. To use old-time language, the man was a lover of his fellows. Feeling in this way, he learned what he knew from his work—that abnormal, antisocial behavior, the egocentric habits of us all, have their major source in psychic social patterns by which we are continually infected and reinfected. He found for himself a way of resisting this infection, launched a program of research into the means of this resistance, and gave his life to what he believed could become therapy for the world. There is almost no "moralistic" language in his studies. The virtues become for him what seem physiological traits in unspoiled human beings. He uses no metaphysical language and never saw the need for such a vocabulary. Technical terms replace ideas commonly expressed as moral values. He regarded his research as "biological," yet its implications must be called *ethical*. A passage in Mrs. Galt's Foreword will illustrate:

In *The Structure of Insanity* (1932) Burrow presents his observations about a possible conflict between two kinds of attention. One, the deflected mode he later called ditention appeared to characterize "normal" adaptation generally. In the ditentive mode of relating to the physical and social environment, attention becomes tied up with the image of the self and fails to make direct contact with its surroundings. This lag permits behavior that is inappropriate or destructive, from the viewpoint of the organism as a whole, to pass as acceptable or even "healthy."

Cotention, on the other hand, was found to be an inclusive, immediate way of attending. Burrow described it as the species basic attentional mode embodying the tensional integration of the race and its balanced interrelational function. Against the background of cotention it was possible to sense the "unnatural" strains and tensions of ditention and their interference with the social functioning of human beings.

Briefly, his research was devoted to discovering the tendency to ditention in oneself and replacing its reaction with one of natural concern for others instead of oneself.

What led Burrow to research in this direction? Early in his career as a psychoanalyst he had an experience which turned him around, reshaped his thinking and mapped his future career. One day he was interpreting the dream of a student-assistant. This young man, whose name was Clarence Shields, "made bold," Burrow relates in *The Social Basis of Consciousness*, "to challenge the honesty of my analytic position, insisting that as far as he was concerned, the test of my sincerity would be met only when I should myself be willing to accept from him the same analytic exactions I was now imposing on others."

Burrow thought this absurd but agreed as a way of humoring his helper. This, he felt, could do no harm. Not harm, but great good, in the form of a revolution resulted, according to Burrow:

Not many weeks after I had taken the patient's chair and yielded him mine I realized that a situation to which I had agreed with more or less levity has assumed an aspect of the profoundest seriousness. My "resistances" to my self-appointed analyst, far from being negligible, were plainly insuperable, but there was now no turning back. The analysis proceeded on its course from day to day and with it my resistances took tighter hold on me. The agreement to which I had voluntarily lent myself was becoming painful beyond words. Whatever empirical interest the situation may have held for me at the outset was now wholly subordinated to the indignation and pain of the position to which I had been brought.

Meanwhile he began to recognize that "my analyst, in changing places with me, had merely shifted to the authoritarian vantage-ground I had myself relinquished and that the situation had remained unaltered still."

This was significant. It marked at once the opening of wholly new vistas of experience. In the light of its discovery I began to sense for the first time what had all along underlain my own analysis and

what, as I now see it, really underlies every analysis. I began to see that the student before me, notwithstanding his undoubted seriousness of purpose, presented a no less personal and proprietary attitude toward me than I had held toward him and that all that had been needed was the authoritarian background to bring this attitude to expression. With the consciousness of this condition I saw what has been for me the crucial revelation of the many years of my analytic work—that, in its individualistic application, the attitude of the psychoanalyst and the attitude of the authoritarian are inseparable. . . . It was due, then, entirely to this unexpected turn of the tables, which placed me in the role of the patient and the patient in the analytic role, that I was fortuitously launched into my years of social experimentation upon the discrepancies of an individualistic analysis.

Thereafter he undertook group analysis with the end in view of restoration of the species solidarity, the normal human fellowship which we have so largely lost.

COMMENTARY

TECHNICAL MATERIALISTS

AFTER an age of abusive self-righteousness such as preceded the French Revolution, it is natural that those who struggle for human freedom become—at least technically—materialists in the hope of preventing any return of the supernatural authority on which the abuses and crimes of centuries were based. We see this in European history in the emergence of men like de Lamettrie and Baron d'Holbach, who were aggressive in their attack on the existing institutions and beliefs of religion, yet lovers of their fellows and humanitarians at heart.

It seems evident, therefore, that during a time of historical and moral transition such as the eighteenth century, labels and intellectual classifications count for little or nothing. The same might be said of several thinkers of our own century—men devoted to the common good and welfare, yet who refuse to use the vocabulary of traditional religion or even idealistic metaphysics. Trigant Burrow, who is the subject of this week's Review, was such a man.

Of all Burrow's books, *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience* (1964) is the most charming and encouraging, since it deals with the human relationships which are natural and good, before the distortions of what Burrow calls the "I" persona—the mask of personality and spontaneous self-interest and egocentric decision—dominates the pattern of our lives.

In the chapter "Phyloanalysis: A Study of the Social Self," Burrow accepts that the principle underlying the prevailing dichotomy of right and wrong is fundamentally sound, but holds our applications to be defective and false.

The systematized "I"-persona, the authoritarianism that arrogates to itself rights which are absolute and unimpeachable in respect to others, is the meaning of prejudice. This false sense of self explains why prejudice and not reason is the universal authority over man's processes today. . . . to lock oneself in a house for years with associates and

students with normal and neurotic personalities, all of whom have voluntarily pledged themselves to a schedule of unremitting challenge of their own habitual reactions, personal and social, is an experimental discipline that definitely gives pause to one's customary prepossessions—to one's affects and projections.

This last sentence gives an idea of the research program carried on by Burrow and his associates. Dr. Burrow's work is now continued by the Lifwynn Foundation, 30 Turkey Hill South, Westport, Conn. 06880.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves ECOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

THE campuses of places of higher learning are quiet these days, according to report. The outcries and demonstrations of the sixties are heard no more, and it is difficult to know what the students are thinking about, on their own time, if they have any. Yet there are a few signs that another kind of "radicalism" may be aborning, one that will make less of a breach between the generations. This development was sensed by an older man, Wallace Stegner, who wrote in *Life* (Aug. 3, 1970) that "ecology is more revolutionary in its implications than either civil rights or peace." Going on, he said:

To realize every aspiration of black and Third World people would be only to redistribute what we have. To get out of Indochina and curb the Pentagon would do no more than return our industrial society to more defensible uses. But ecology, made a guiding principle in our affairs, would turn our society upside down, question its aims, assumptions and methods, alter its mentality, overthrow its gods. And possibly save it from itself.

Since Stegner said this, examples of efforts by ecologists to change our mentality have become numerous, mainly among educators in one or another application of ecological thinking. Wes Jackson, a plant geneticist of the Land Institute in Kansas, declared in a recent paper that we must no longer think of land merely as an available "resource," for it is much more. He says:

The notion of resource is restricted to the notion of usefulness or utility. Land and people transcend a one-dimensional definition which places economics primary. When economics is regarded as the brightest star in the constellation of considerations, economic problems are inevitable, for as Thoreau noted, "the world is more beautiful than it is useful." Should anyone's suggestions for a sustainable agriculture be trusted who doesn't believe in that?

This is no rhetorical fillip. Jackson believes it, even as Aldo Leopold, ecological prophet, believed what he said in "The Land Ethic" in *Sand*

County Almanac: that we need to love the land in order to save it, and ourselves. The time has come, Jackson says, when seeing the land as our companion, friend, and living ally is no longer an option but a necessity. He says:

I think we are at that exact instant in history where, as a people, we are discovering another law of nature, but this time we are discovering it indirectly, at the point where it spills over into human culture. Vulgarly stated, the law is that for any level of biological organization—ecosystem, individual or culture—if a "bottom line" is designated, that singularity of emphasis will be what breaks the system. The pattern is clear. It creeps up on us. First the end justifies the means and eventually, to use the phrase of Irwin Chargaff, the ends "sanctify the means." When the ends justify the means there is still time to change. We are dangerously close to sanctifying the means for production agriculture.

Our economic life will remain healthy only so long as other considerations buttress it, give it support. Alone it will totter. The discussions about agriculture have been narrow and agriculture is tottering. Economic considerations, taken exclusively, appeal to those unable to tolerate the ambiguities associated with the rest of the constellation of considerations which impinge on a problem—they satisfy the narrowly analytical mind, the mind given to the sort of things simple enough to be accommodated by equations and graphs. We have been so intrigued by the *graphs* showing inputs, production, cost and return that we have felt little need for the *paragraphs*. The problem of agriculture may be defined by economics, but its solution will not.

In short, the bad things can always be counted, but the good things which have the power to prevent the bad things are never statistical. Ecological science, fortunately, is able to recognize both, to measure evils in ways that most people don't understand at first, and then point to the remedies required. The remedies are never sharp-shooting solutions but the establishment of simple health. Jackson looks at our present methods of agriculture and finds an unmistakable lesson in the fossil fuel age:

What we see from that vantage point is that "sustainability" for both agriculture and culture will not be achieved in a high energy culture. That is

good news. High energy tends to destroy the elements of sustainability.

In another paper, given last February at a conference on ecological farming, Jackson said:

What we need always to keep before us is the question: "How are we going to run agriculture and culture on sunlight?" What are we going to do when the oil is gone? What are we going to do to stop soil erosion? Ecosystem agriculture has an answer to all these questions. . . . Why are we so slow in getting started? Well, such an ecological agriculture was really not possible until the last ten or fifteen years, until the great synthesis began to emerge, until so much knowledge about the workings of natural ecosystems was discovered.

For us at the Land Institute, the philosophy means that we feature perennials in polycultures as we work with ten students at a time for a 43-week period from mid-February to mid-December. We use the prairie as an analogy. About half our time is devoted to reading, thinking, and discussing the social, political, economic and religious implications of running agriculture and culture on sunlight. We have wind machines, solar collectors, a large garden and the like, but all our research is in the area of sustainable agriculture.

Wes Jackson thinks of this work as a natural and underlying part of the peace movement.

. . . it does seem to me that everything we do either increases the probability of nuclear holocaust or decreases it. A land whose soils have been saved from erosion and salt, a land whose agriculture is not fossil-fuel-dependent or in need of nuclear power is a land which will not need to allocate so many of its financial resources toward insuring that the Persian Gulf stays open. And though I deeply oppose nuclear power, in this respect oil *is* more dangerous than a nuclear power plant and from a nuclear point of view. Part of the conflict between nations boils down to being a carbon war. The most important carbon is soil carbon. We lost a third of this carbon with the opening up of the continent, and until 1960, before fossil fuel burning greatly accelerated, half the carbon which was put in the atmosphere by the U.S. came from the soils and half from fossil fuel burning. On a global scale, agriculture has contributed more carbon to the atmosphere than the industrial world. The main pioneers at work for a peaceable world, therefore, are those working for a sustainable or sunshine agriculture.

A paragraph or two from one of the ten students at the Land Institute (in *The Land Report* for last Winter) will give an idea of their life and activities:

We spent the summer, which seemed to be the hottest, driest summer of our lives, irrigating, weeding and pollinating, sometimes forgetting the purpose of all the work. In August, four of us went up to a much cooler Nebraska for a week to attend the Center for Rural Affairs conference on agricultural policy. . . . We appreciated the classroom sessions again, after a summer spent on physical work, even though the prairie ecology questions and genetics problems required considerable out-of-class preparation. The readings on information entropy and evolution were some of the most theoretical and difficult we had ever been assigned at the Land Institute. After discussing "The Downward Slope to Greater Diversity" by Dan Brooks and Ed Wiley, Wes arranged a special seminar for us by one of the authors, Ed Wiley, a professor at the University of Kansas. We also read articles about "reindustrialization," and population issues, including essays by Garrett Hardin. Later in the term we read *The Next Economy* by Paul Hawken, and sections out of *Building a Sustainable Society* by Lester Brown and the *Unsettling of America* and *The Gift of Good Land* by Wendell Berry. . . .

FRONTIERS

Einstein Wrote

WE confront a dilemma. Words become criminals, thoughts can betray us into destruction. Either there is a pathological lacuna between intention and action (the fall of the shadow, as T. S. Eliot wrote), or else there is a far-reaching will to deception, itself a vitiating pathology.

I remember my childhood and youth. Many of the early convictions are still intact, only diversified and adjusted according to the teachings of experience. I know what I do not want as the content and conditionality of my remaining life.

I have four children, two sons and two daughters. I know what I do not want as their patrimony. I know what I reject as their day-to-day realities which, notwithstanding, continue to attack them.

I read Einstein's lifelong pleadings for peace. I read Gandhi, Heschel, Buber, Camus, Rolland, Martin Luther King. The ideas are thoroughly developed. The options are accessible in the volumes of thoughtful men. They are eloquently explicated, sensible and sane. Summarily they are rejected and ignored. Worse—they are accepted and relegated to obscurity.

Einstein wrote: "If we ourselves have the courage to decide in favor of peace, we will have peace." Nothing has gotten better, from then till now.

Even that isn't the truth. Life has gotten worse; death has gotten bigger. Death enjoys itself these days, dresses in the customs of existence, parades and teaches indifference. Death is an open book, the one, I fear, most of us are reading from, although we refuse to acknowledge it.

What then do we do? Why should we care? How do we decide?

A more important question: Is there enough integrity for us to collect ourselves and make the

sustained effort necessary to break from the dominance of death? After all, we are losing the war on hatred. We are losing to ignorance, racism, distrust, fanaticism. We are losing the war on war itself. To be sensitive is to be a balloon in a windstorm full of razors and pins. To be authentically concerned is to be exceptionally exposed—and the world no longer respects martyrdom.

We are confronted with a dilemma. We cannot blindly run out, here and there, in every direction. We cannot sit in towers dreaming of human character and destiny. The seeds that were sown from fruitful minds have fallen on fallow ground. Do we then submit to life as madness? Are we content to breathe the noxious fumes of cynicism?

Einstein wrote: "Revolution without the use of violence was the method by which Gandhi brought about the liberation of India. It is my belief that the problem of bringing peace to the world on a supranational basis will be solved only by employing Gandhi's method on a large scale."

Have we still the will to discern, reject, make sacrifices? Do we yet possess the strength and courage to make change happen on more than a superficial level? More correctly, will a significant number of us make it possible to live more than superficially?

There are solutions. They are not easy, reducible to rational terms alone, but they are sane, they are thoroughly human. And of course humanity is the first casualty of our contemporary dilemma, hence the first quality in need of resuscitation. Will we revitalize the verb of humanness and make a reclamation of power as the assumption of personal responsibility?

If there are answers for us, they are actions, modes of being, congregational lifeways. Periodic protests will not extricate us from the quagmire we are caught in. The questions which confront us are in need of a response that is our persons. We shall have to live defiance which is also

extrication, which is also affirmation. Not thinking, not saying, not the sporadic doing of alternatives, but the persistent being of human difference is the viable option. Not being a part, an actor rehearsed for demonstration alone, but a person committed to living the dynamic of non-cooperation, is the foundation of solutions.

Einstein wrote: "In the last analysis the peaceful coexistence of peoples is primarily dependent upon mutual trust. . . . And the basis of trust is a loyal relationship of give-and-take." Do we understand this, the circumambient language of love? Do we still know the way to loyal relationships? Can we still find entrance into the process of give-and-take?

Even now, dialogic openness summons us. Do we have what it takes to reply? Are we recollectable enough, in our persons and with one another, to have the responsiveness of required living change?

Einstein also wrote that a person finally is what a person is. Somewhere between cynicism and altruistic fantasy we are in need of being persons for life, hence makers of peace. (The quotations are from *Einstein on Peace*, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden, Simon & Schuster.)

We confront a dilemma. And the world does not get better. According to the pacifist Einstein, energy is equal to mass. For good or for evil it will not endure as is for long. An explosion is inevitable, unless we will *be* the wisdom of the wise—the energy to change the masses.

If the "we" of the foregoing statement is comprehended to mean contemporary thinkers and doers working for the continuance of life on our planet, then yet another pressing question emerges. By what means do we effect the massive democratic motivation and historical transformations needed? There are many ideas circulating. While we examine concepts, the megacrisis of modern problematics requires us to

guard against sterile cerebralization; thoughts without realizable connections or contexts.

Notwithstanding, I will briefly sketch a suggestion which readily translates into action. I cannot predict the outcome of its application.

Beginning with the conviction that peace work is life work (saving and qualitatively improving human life), then, like any other form of positive labor, we need a value-conducive place to work from if we would see optimal results. Thus I am advocating the implementation of holistic peace centers to address the full range of needs for personal integration, non-violent training and social reformation.

Such centers could readily become the focal points of many local circles, from which to initiate the required alterations in social space; redesigning from an ambience overcrowded with the preparations and instruments for destruction to an environment quick with the actions and activators of life.

Here too the substantiation of persons goes hand in hand with the reclamation of power and democratic participation.

Still, the original uncertainties continue. The anxious questions remain. With each beginning I am brought to asking, can we trust enough to sustain ourselves through the arduous extrications? Are the Einstein-Gandhi bridges of non-violent transformation open to us? Are we open to light?

Einstein wrote, "As long as nations systematically continue to prepare for war, fear, distrust and selfish ambitions will again lead to war."

I read the words. I live in a world of mutable realities, a world of volition. Neither an optimist nor a pessimist, I am a man among people; a man with questions.

Albany, Oregon

DAVID SPARENBERG