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THE WONDER AND THE CONTRADICTION

IT is a poor pretense at communication which begins with ecstacy but fails to end with a question. Actually, delight stops being delight without its question at the end. The true-believing poet who celebrates only wonders—or, as happens more often these days, bemoans uninterruptedly the pain of his life and the world—sings a falsifying monotone. The chief thing to know about human life is that it contains and is made of contradictions. Until one recognizes that contradictions make the field of experience and that growth is learning the art of balance among them, a distinctively human life has hardly begun.

In his recently published autobiography, Loren Eiseley muses on a great implicit contradiction—one which may include all the others. It is easy to come upon this contradiction, no matter where you begin. After watching for a time the circling flight of some large wasps in his backyard, Dr. Eiseley wondered why they were there, what they might be *for*. The question was indecent, scientifically speaking, but he asked it anyway, because, being human he had to. Then he said:

> I can only repeat my dictum softly: in the world there is nothing to explain the world. Nothing to explain the necessity of life, nothing to explain the hunger of the elements to become life, nothing to explain why the stolid realm of rock and soil and mineral should diversify itself into beauty, terror, and uncertainty. To bring organic novelty into existence, to create pain, injustice, joy, demands more than we can discern in the nature that we analyze so completely.

Once the human situation is defined in these terms, we can begin to use the inadequate materials of experience to show that this ignorance of meaning or purpose, while real, is not *total*. Delight, for example, tells us something about both ourselves and the world. What is delight? It is, one might say, the sudden revelation of hitherto unperceived kinships. It is the feeling of union achieved across barriers of separation—a qualified and transient nirvana which has a multitude of levels. Delight is therefore a kind of knowing, although a knowing beyond words. When delight palls or passes, it leaves the pain of separation in its wake. And then, if we can get above both delight and separation, we see that a human being is filled with the potentialities of both union and isolation—is somehow both one and many. To know this is some sort of gain in self-knowledge, even if the *meaning* of the polarity remains obscure.

How do we know that there has been a gain? Because one's life can be altered by its leverage. There may be a rise in the dignities of existence, an irrecoverable loss of taste for petty things. We have words for such fulfillments—words for matters known only intuitively, yet words with secure meanings. Emerson's make an example:

> It seems as if the day was not wholly profane, in which we have given some heed to a natural object. The fall of snow-flakes in a still air, preserving to each crystal its perfect form; the glowing of sleet over a wide sheet of water, and over plains; the waving ryefield; the mimic waving of acres of houstonia, whose innumerable florets whiten and ripple before the eye; the reflections of trees and flowers in glassy lakes; the musical steaming odorous south wind, which converts all trees to wind-harps; the crackling and spurting of hemlock in the flames; or of pine logs, which yield glory to the walls and faces in the sitting room,—these are the music and pictures of the most ancient religion.
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> My house stands in low land, with limited outlook, and on the skirt of the village. But I go with my friend to the shore of our little river, and with one stroke of the paddle, I leave the village politics and personalities, yes, and the world of villages and personalities behind, and pass into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight, too bright almost for spotted

man to enter without novitiate and probation. We penetrate bodily this incredible beauty: we dip our hands in this painted element: our eyes are bathed in these lights and forms. A holiday . . . a royal revel, the proudest, most heart-rejoicing festival that valor and beauty, power and taste, ever decked and enjoyed, establishes itself on the instant. These sunset clouds, these delicately emerging stars, with their private and ineffable glances, signify it and proffer it.

I am taught the poorness of our invention, the ugliness of towns and palaces. Art and luxury have early learned that they must work as enhancement and sequel to this original beauty. I am overinstructed for my return. Henceforth I shall be hard to please. I cannot go back to toys. I am grown expensive and sophisticated. I can no longer live without elegance: but a countryman shall be my master of revels. He who knows the most, he who knows what sweets and virtues are in the ground, the waters, the plants, the heavens, and how to come at these enchantments, is the rich and royal man. Only as far as the masters of the world have called in nature to their aid, can they reach the height of magnificence.

There is a wealth of intuitive learning here, so much that it could easily become intoxicating. Yet Emerson was no intoxicated man. He did not lose himself in the *bhakti* of a New England summer. Nature, for him, was a collection of wonderful signs; it did not tell all. In another portion of this essay (on Nature), he wrote:

Nature is loved by what is best in us. It is loved as the city of God, although, or rather because there is no citizen. The sunset is unlike anything that is underneath it: it wants men. And the beauty of nature must always seem unreal and mocking, until the landscape has human figures, that are as good as itself. If there were good men, there would never be this rapture in nature. If the king is in his palace, nobody looks at the walls. It is when he is gone, and the house is filled with grooms and gazers, that we turn from the people to find relief in the majestic men that are suggested by the pictures and the architecture. The attics who complain of the sickly separation of the beauty of nature from the thing to be done, must consider that our hunting of the picturesque is inseparable from our protest against false society.

Man is fallen; nature is erect, and serves as a differential thermometer, detecting the presence or absence of the divine sentiment in man. By fault of our dullness and selfishness, we are looking up to nature, but when we are convalescent, nature will look up to us. We see the foaming brook with compunction: if our own life flowed with the right energy, we should shame the brook.

What teeming arrogance Emerson proposes—that Nature is less, or might be less, than Man! Was he in his right mind—or, perhaps, a nineteenth-century right mind, before the spoilers had turned loose so much ugliness in the world? Conceivably, we cannot take instruction from Emerson on this matter until we have regained some balance for ourselves and given Nature the balance she requires. For then we might obtain the perspective that enabled him to say:

Nature is the incarnation of a thought, and turns to a thought again, as ice becomes water or gas. The world is mind precipitated, and the volatile essence is forever escaping again into the state of free thought. Hence the virtue and pungency of the influence on the mind, of natural objects. Man imprisoned, man crystallized, man vegetative, speaks to man personified. . . . Every moment instructs, and every object: for wisdom is infused into every form. It has poured into us as blood; it convulses us as pain; it slid into us as pleasure; it enveloped us in dull, melancholy days, or in days of cheerful labor; we did not guess its essence, until after a long time.

The wonders of thought incarnated in Nature—what an extravagant theme! Yet a contemporary writer does not find this improbable at all, although in reverse terms. In *Earthwalk*, Philip Slater suggests that man's "psychic excretions" do not blow away into empty space—no more than the chemical pollutions of land, air, and sea.

We cannot ignore his [man's] fantasies of superpotenq when they are represented by overpowered automobiles that claim a thousand lives a week; his paranoid fears when they are expressed in bugging devices and security data banks; his hatreds when they appear in the form of a nuclear arsenal capable of eliminating vertebrate life on our planet. Our psychic excretions, in other words, show an annoying tendency to become part of our real

> environment, so that we are forced to consume our own psychic wastes in physical form. . . .
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> A science-fiction film some years ago dramatized the problem of psychic waste materialization in the following way: Space explorers discovered a planet that had once boasted a civilization of the highest order, the inhabitants of which had found a way to materialize thoughts directly. The explorers could not understand why this civilization had vanished utterly, until gigantic monsters began to appear. They then realized that the planet's inhabitants had neglected to consider that the unconscious wishes and fantasies would materialize along with their consciously purposed thoughts, and had been destroyed by this lack of perspicacity.
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> This drama is a parable for our time. Our own reality differs from the space fantasy primarily in that (1) thought materialization takes a longer time, and (2) there is no separation between conscious and unconscious products. Every technological advance contains within itself a monster, for each one expresses in one form or another man's monstrous narcissism as well as the simple desires of which it appears superficially to be an expression.

Well, if we deduce from this parable a general principle of psychic cosmogenesis, we shall have to stipulate that the universe and wide world of nature as we experience it is the embodiment of grander desires and more profound thoughts than ours.

But what is it that makes the spectacle of nature so splendidly engrossing? Can the reason be that nature is single-purposed, that all her varied undertakings effect but one magnificent intention—the creation and perpetuation of form? Excellences are inevitably born of undistracted concentration, and beauty seems the natural result of every natural law. For us the perfections of nature are both spur and reproach. Why, we continually ask ourselves, can't *we* be natural in the way that all these creatures are? If man is "fallen," as Emerson says, what is he fallen from, and why can't he pick himself up? And if nature is erect, what keeps nature from falling, too?

Perhaps man has a different and more difficult business in life. If the work of nature is simply the evolution of forms, it may be the human role to find out the meaning of the creation and limitation of forms—to answer, as Loren Eiseley puts it, the ever-recurring "why" questions.

Enlarging on his dictum, quoted earlier, Dr. Eiseley went on:

> When I made the remark that "in the world there is nothing to explain the world," I was, in a sense, perhaps, addressing myself to some of my more materialistic colleagues who are masters on aspects of science. Again, let me make it clear: I am not denigrating them. But finally you reach a point where you can say, "We can show you cause and effect from this and that and that, and we can term this a kind of natural law, if you will" (although what is termed "natural law" tends to vary from one time to another). But what I meant was that when you pass beyond this and say "Why does this universe exist? Why does this world exist? Why does life exist? And take the multitudinous forms in which it does, then, you are reaching the threshold of metaphysics; you are groping into an area in which science cannot supply an answer. . . . It is the difference between how things operate once you have them, and the question of why there should be a universe.

Almost certainly, any answer to this question would be a term in an infinite regress. To know, that is, would be no longer to ask, since universe and life are doubtless one, and as One have their own justification. The same question was raised many centuries ago, bringing this reply (but no answer) in a Vedic hymn:

> Who knows the secret? who proclaimed it here?
> Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
> The Gods themselves came later into being—
> Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
> That, whence all this great creation came,
> Whether Its will created or was mute,
> The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
> He knows it—or perchance even He knows not.

A lived meaning may provide fulfillment deeper than any "explained" meaning can reach. There have been those who, although they would not answer the question, acted as though they knew. Prometheus was one of these, the Buddha another, and Christ another. The reason for the world, whatever it may be, made them labor

unceasingly to bring it to the highest fulfillment. And in passing they gave a common instruction: It is better to be drawn by a vision than to be driven by fate.

But the vision is not in the world, nor is it actually of the world. The dimensions of meaning they taught do not convert into slide rule calculations, or even morphogenetic fields, although to have a vision—to gain the focus and the screen for seeing and deciphering the world—one must come here, and be confined on earth.

Nature has endless visionary displays, but not *the* vision. Again, from Emerson:

> . . . there is throughout nature something mocking, something that leads us on and on, but arrives nowhere, keeps no faith with us. All promise outruns performance. We live in a system of approximations. Every end is prospective of some other end, which is also temporary; a round and final success nowhere. We are encamped in nature, not domesticated. Hunger and thirst lead us on to eat and drink; but bread and wine, mix and cook them how you will, leave us hungry and thirsty, after the stomach is full. It is the same with all our arts and performances. Our music, our poetry, our language itself are not satisfaction, but suggestions. The hunger for wealth, which reduces the planet to a garden, fools the eager pursuer. What is the end sought? Plainly to secure the ends of good sense and beauty, from the intrusion of deformity or vulgarity of any kind. But what an operose method! What a train of means to secure a little conversation! This palace of brick and stone, these servants, this kitchen, these stables, horses and equipage, this bank-stock, and file of mortgages; trade to all the world, country-house and cottage by the waterside, all for a little conversation, high, clear, and spiritual! Could it not be had as well by beggars on the highway? No, all these things came from successive efforts of these beggars to remove friction from the wheels of life, and give opportunity.

Meanwhile, in barely a century, Emerson's gentle depiction of the distractions we make is turned into a nightmare. The "train of means" has become a psychiatrist's bill of particulars, and who, now, would think of calling the planet a "garden"? The wonder, wherever we turn, is submerged in contradiction.

The forest, Thoreau said, was his church, and he said it so well he made us share his reverence. But what gods did he worship there, and from whom did he learn his religion? What did it teach him? To loaf his whole life through, some said. For him, as for Emerson, Nature seems to have been a cipher which, somehow or other, he understood but knew better than to translate into the vulgar tongue. Let it, he may have thought, remain an enigma. Men are obliged to study enigmas, but what is clearly explained becomes something effortlessly known and so never truly understood.

These are days when all the enigmatic children of nature are gaining extraordinary attention. They know so much holistically, we say, that civilized peoples have forgotten and must now relearn. There is a long passage which speaks to this point in Richard Llewellyn's novel, *Man in a Mirror*. In this story a Western-educated African leader wonders how, if at all, he can help his people to cope with modern civilization:

> Nterenke began to realize with increasing dismay which he found almost comical that the Masai intellect held not the least notion of physical science, no philosophy, or sense of ideas in the abstract, or any mathematical processes higher than the use of the hands and fingers. He amused himself in trying to imagine how he might teach Olle Tselene the theory of the spectrum. Yet every tracker knew the value of sunlight in a dewdrop because the prism told where the track led and when it had been made. How the eye saw the colors or why the colors were supposed to exist was never a mystery or problem. They had no place anywhere in thought. But all male Masai from the time they were Ol Ayoni, had a sharp sense of color from living in the forest and choosing plumage for the cap. Color became a chief need in the weeks of shooting and comparing, and taking out a smaller for a larger bird, or throwing away a larger for the smaller, more colorful. He wondered where the idea of color began, or why a scholar should interest himself. Mr. James had taught that sound politics led to a rich economy where people earned more money for less hours a week, and so created a condition of leisure needed by inventors, whether mental or physical. The Masai had always enjoyed an ample

> economy, if it meant a complete filling of needs, and after the animals were tended, there was plenty of leisure. Yet there were no inventors of any sort. There was a father-to-son and mouth-to-mouth passing of small items that pretended to be history, and a large fund of forest lore that might pass as learning, but there were no scholars, no artists, no craftsmen in the European sense.
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> The effect was to lock a growing mind in a wide prison of physical action and disciplined restriction that by habit became accepted as absolute liberty.

So the Masai are being expelled from paradise and must encounter contradiction. It happens, sooner or later, and again and again, to us all, the only question being whether it is ever right to destroy other people's illusions, and whether, when we have done so, there can be any justification for obliging them to accept our own.

The wonder especially worth noticing is that there have been a few humans—Emerson was one—who seemed to understand all this quite well, yet were able to live calm, undismayed, and productive lives, and had the heart to offer extraordinary encouragement to their fellow men.

REVIEW
NOT THE SAME AT ALL

NO personal striving in recent years has been more ardent or popular than the pursuit of creativity. Centuries ago people sought to be good, just, generous, brave, and even holy, but none of these goals can compare, today, with the desire to be "creative." Is it because the fruits of creativity give delight to others? That originality, when it does not disturb, is generally much admired? Or does the idea of creativity reinforce feelings of genuine identity, in contrast with the reductive, analytical method in science which tends to deny independent individuality in human beings?

After some reading on this subject—the books and articles on creativity seem endless—one may be tempted to conclude that the initial requirement of being creative is to stop wanting to be. Creativity may be something like happiness—never acquired by being pursued. Years ago Viktor Frankl told an interviewer:

> I fear I must contradict your Declaration of Independence. Pursuit of happiness seems to me to be self-defeating, because man originally never pursued happiness. Happiness and pleasure are side-effects, destroyed precisely to the extent that they are aimed at.

Should we then stop talking about creativity, stop encouraging people to think that they can become creative by deliberate effort—the way a weight-lifter learns to lift weights? Probably so. But there seems not the slightest chance of discouraging this interest until all the direct approaches are shown to be futile, even barriers to the goal. It may be that Charlotte Lackner Doyle, who teaches at Sarah Lawrence University, makes a contribution to this discouragement in her article, "The Creative Process: A Study in Paradox," in *Etc.* for December, 1975. She begins with an account of her own frustrations. Asked to take part in a conference on "The Creative Experience," she had to put together a speech on the subject.

> I sat down to write what could be said about the creative process. But whatever generalization I wrote down, the opposite also seemed true. Let me show you what I mean. First I wrote, "the creative process requires freedom and spontaneity. But then the aphorism quoted by Ezra Pound rang in my ears, "Any damn fool can be spontaneous." And though I didn't quite agree with Mr. Pound, I immediately straightened up in my chair, leaned forward resolutely and wrote, "the creative process demands discipline, concentration, a commitment to work." I thought of Freud and wrote, "the creative process taps the primitive and the emotional." And then I thought of Shakespeare and Rembrandt and wrote, "the creative process requires insight intelligence and maturity., I thought of the psychologist, Guilford, and wrote "the creative process involves fantasy, inventiveness and ability of thought to diverge from what is. But then I remembered my own interviews with artists and wrote, "the creative process demands honesty and a commitment to truth." Then statements began to crowd in on me: The creative process is self-expression; the creative process cannot take place unless the creator forgets about self. The creative process is a joy; the creative process is fraught with fear, terror and frustration. The creative process is its own reward; the creative process needs support and encouragement. As contradictory statements floated around in my head, the title for this talk came to me: The Creative Process: A Study in Paradox.

Each of the "requirements" of creativity listed by this psychologist could be the subject of an elaborate essay.

The head of research for General Electric once questioned a number of productive inventors on how they got their ideas. Both hard work and spontaneity entered in. One said that "hunches" leading to discovery flutter around in the brain like birds in a cage. Once in a while a bird finds an unguarded exit into the conscious mind where the inventor can capture it. Trigant Burrow declared that the "preconscious matrix" of the mind, the primitive background of awareness, when allowed to pervade the individual, produces a personality that is "sensitive, inspirational, intuitive, and creative." Another of the G.E. inventors felt that he had a "guardian angel" that whispered advice and prevented mistakes.

There is enough testimony from notably creative persons to allow some generalizations. Charlotte Doyle suggests the stages of the creative act described by Graham Wallas, involving "preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification." The third step of this sequence brings a kind of climax—"the sudden falling into place of all the parts." But at this moment there must be no intrusions of personal consciousness—neither a proud nor a diffident "I am doing this" feeling:

> It is the period, for the writer, when the characters take over, when the melodies flow without forcing, when the painting seems to paint itself. The artist is totally absorbed in the work. All the awkwardness that comes from watching yourself at work, from the fear that what you are doing is no good, from careful critical selection, is no longer a part of the flow of thought and action. The artist's head, his hands, his lips are totally directed by the forces that have been generated by the sense of direction and the ideas-in-flesh as he is working with them. All intellectual and emotional resources, all skills and experiences become part of the artist's reach and movement toward the eventual goal.

Interestingly, none of these things can be done well by following a formula. Only one who has completed some worthy creative accomplishment—it need not be great—will understand the meaning of preparation, incubation, and illumination. The classification of steps is like a maxim: the maxim becomes intelligible only after experiencing and reflecting on the act to which it applies. Will knowing about the sequence of these stages make anyone more "creative"? In some cases, perhaps, but waiting for illumination after methodical preparation and incubation would almost certainly be like waiting for Godot. The familiar forms of motivation, in short, do not work in creativity. As in hitting the mark in Zen archery: If you *want* to hit it, you can't.

Another way of putting this difficulty would be to say that the describable factors leading to an act of creation are not part of the act, but only the removal of obstacles. It may be something like driving a car. You may know all about a gasoline engine, be able to fix it and make it run smoothly, but if you have no destination you won't go any place. On the other hand, if you *have* a destination, then it may become vitally important to know how to fix and operate the car. What can be said about creativity has to do only with fixing or preparing what will be used by the creative act, and it is quite possible that concentrating on the techniques of fixing will prevent anything good from happening. Or worse: If you only watch the gauges and listen to the engine purr, you may run into something. Fortunately, most preparation for creation is accomplished by instinct, without any fuss. So it is *not* like driving a car.

Where does the motivation for creativity come from? It seems likely that a proper definition of this sort of motivation would end by defining something else. A talk Miss Doyle had with Grace Paley comes close to this idea. Miss Paley spoke of a boy who was trying to be both "good and creative." She said that she thought that "good" and "creative" were not the same thing. This exchange ensued:

> Question: Then there's no morality that seems to underlie creative people?
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> Grace Paley: It's the morality of telling the truth. That has to be the prime and only thing. To be an artist is to have an absolute compulsion to tell the truth. Some people just want to be writers. That's different already. It's not the same thing at all.
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> Question: Did you want to be a writer?
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> Grace Paley: Yes, I did. I really wanted to be a writer. I always did think I was a writer, and though I thought of myself as a writer, it was only when I hit that thing, which was not when I was young—it wasn't until I had developed this absolute compulsion to know the truth somehow, to deal with it, that I really considered that I became a writer dealing with it at all, or that I wrote decently.

This, you might say, is the Morality which turns all the virtues into wonderful side-effects. Why are they better as side-effects? Because they came naturally, they weren't pursued. Why are unsought virtues better? Because they really

belong to us only when they are not acquisitions or possessions. To possess a virtue is to be in some measure possessed by it, and this is a massive obstacle to creativity. How can a consciously virtuous man forget himself?

Well, shouldn't people try to be good, just, generous, brave, and even holy, as in days of old?

Who would dare to say no to this question? But the modern world says no to it over and over again, by giving all its attention to other, less moral-sounding goals. There may be a reason for this. The human insistence on independence, freedom, and self-determination is spontaneously opposed to being told what to do, and instructed in what is Right. It hardly seems virtuous to be virtuous because someone tells you to. A welcomed morality must be one's own. Morality—which is profoundly needed these days—might grow more popular if moralists would stop advocating it for a while.

Meanwhile, perhaps in moral self-defense, we choose creativity as a goal. And quite possibly we sense that true creativity is inwardly related to the higher morality of truth-telling. Creativity, in short, is another Taoist secret. The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao. Think, for example, of how corruptible is the idea of "telling the truth." Abuse of truth-telling is the theme of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck.* An artist, you could say, protects his truth from corruption by not telling it all, by using symbols instead of definitions, by relating a vision instead of publishing a map.

How does an artist know what to say, how much to tell, which metaphors to use? By his creativity, we have to answer, which tells us nothing at all. But it does add some meaning to say that devotion to truth may give access to an inner world of harmony. If this is acceptable, then Trigant Burrow put it well in saying that "since this inherent harmony—which in the artist is sublimated through his creative genius into an expression of beauty—is an inspiration toward truth, the impulse of the artist represents a vitally *moral* trend."

COMMENTARY
EFFICIENCY AND BOUNTY

IN the *Nation* for March 13, replying to a critic of his article quoted in this week's "Children," Wendell Berry describes the effects of the failure to *nurture* the land:

> That "farming is the factory of agriculture" may be evident to people who fly over the Midwest in an airplane. . . . The problem is that factory technology generalizes, formulizes, stiffens, coarsens, and devitalizes people's relationship with their land. As the size of the machines increases, for example, it becomes less and less possible to *consider* the varying soils, declivities and aspects of any given tract of land. To a big operator on a big tractor on a big farm, the land has become just acreage—exactly as to our highly specialized and frantically busy surgeons we have become just bodies. One practical result of this has been a widening of the agricultural margins. Lands that could be productively farmed and conserved, even improved, in small units under intensive care are now neglected, abandoned, or used destructively under the modern system. The marginal people, of course, become an "urban problem" and so are ignored by the agriculturalists. They are nevertheless part of the cost of factory farming. But even on lands best suited to it, this sort of farming is criminally wasteful—of human value and energy, of course, but also of topsoil and petroleum. According to one recent estimate it now costs two bushels of topsoil to produce a bushel of Iowa corn: the necessary conservation measures would simply cost too much, take too much time. And to produce a calorie of that same corn may require, according to various estimates, from five to twelve calories of petroleum. This is called the most "efficient" agriculture in the world. It is, literally, the most fantastic.

Mr. Berry points out that possibly the most bountiful farms in the world have been two- and three-acre farms (he recommends reading F. H. King's *Farmers of Forty Centuries*). The object of nurture in relation to land, he says, is "the health of the land and the farming community," not production alone, for the reason that "this health is the only guarantee of production." The land and the people, he says, "must be deeply bound together by a preserving and settled culture, not economics or technology only."

A great many people find it quite difficult to think of themselves as farmers or even gardeners. This may be natural enough, since only some four per cent of the population are today directly employed in agriculture. But it seems worth while to reflect on the possibility that, only twenty-four years from now, in the year 2,000, we may have very different ideas on this question, perhaps from growth in understanding of ourselves, perhaps from responding to necessity.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
AN UNFORTUNATE OBSCURITY

WE know a small boy who, when he wanders in the hills near his home, seems interested mainly in locating inclines on which, some day, he will be able to ride a "dirt bike" to the top. He is deaf to stepped-down versions of John Muir. Not even ponies attract his attention, although there are several in the neighborhood. He already speaks the language of junior-high technology with a practiced air. There is, it seems, not a pastoral cell in his body.

He is of course one of many. The cult of the dirt bike has many devoted adherents who recruit neophytes even in kindergarten. The sound of these machines, more invading than a chain saw or a jackhammer, declares the intensity of the faith. It has at least a dozen pitches and timbres, all insulting to the ear.

We may for the present have won the battle of SST (and the Concorde?) in Washington; we have not won it at home.

Is this because the places where we live are more like launching pads than homes? Because there is little in the life of a child to weave his existence into natural processes? The artificial circumstances of the environment may be a part of the explanation, but what can only be called the Faustian impulse runs too insistently to be accounted for as "conditioning." If we could understand what ticks in these children, we would be a long way toward understanding the entire history of the West. The problem, at any rate, is not to suppress the Faustian impulse but to turn it into Promethean resolve—and for most children the time for such transformations is not yet. Meanwhile, we have hardly any idea how to help them get ready.

In the *Nation* for Feb. 7 Wendell Berry writes more or less on this subject—on, that is, what Americans have done to the land they began settling some three hundred years ago:

> We can understand a great deal of our history—from Cortés's destruction of Tenochtitlan in 1521 to the bulldozer attack on Kentucky coal fields four and a half centuries later—by thinking of ourselves as conquerors and victims. In order to understand our own predicament, and the work that is to be done, we would do well to shift the terms slightly and say that we are divided between exploitation and nurture. The first set of terms is too simple for the purpose, because it proposes, in any given situation, to divide people neatly and absolutely into two groups; it only becomes complicated when we are dealing with situations in succession—as when a colonist who persecuted Indians then resisted persecution by the Crown. The terms exploitation and nurture, on the other hand, describe a division not only between persons but also within persons. We are all to some extent the products of an exploitive society, and it would be foolish and self-defeating to pretend that we do not bear its stamp.

This is the only sensible—and hopeful—way to look at such matters, which include the propensities of small boys, indeed, which are perverse expansions of the propensities of small boys. Mr. Berry continues:

> Let me outline as briefly as I can what seem to me the characteristics of these opposite kinds of mind. I conceive a strip miner to be a model exploiter, and as a model nurturer I take the old-fashioned idea or ideal of a farmer. The exploiter is a specialist, an expert; the nurturer is not. The standard of the exploiter is efficiency; the standard of the nurturer is care. The exploiter's goal is money, profit; the nurturer's goal is health, his land's health, his own, his family's, his community's, his country's. Whereas the exploiter asks of a piece of land only how much it can be made to produce, and how quickly it can be made to produce it, the nurturer asks a question that is much more complex and difficult: what is its carrying capacity? (That is, how much can be taken from it without diminishing it? What can it produce *dependably* for an indefinite time?) The exploiter wishes to earn as much as possible by as little work as possible; the nurturer expects, certainly, to have a decent living from his work, but his characteristic wish is to work *as well* as possible—he takes pride and pleasure in his work. The competence of the exploiter is in organization; that of the nurturer is in order—a human order, that is, that accommodates itself both to other order and to mystery. The exploiter typically serves an office, a factory, or a garrison, the nurturer serves land, household, community, place. The exploiter thinks in

terms of numbers, "hard facts"; the nurturer in terms of character, condition, quality, kind.

The quiet harmonies of the nurturer's life may not be able to compete openly with an exploiter's delights—not, at any rate, for small boys, who seem to subsist mainly on a diet of excitement—but the undramatic framework of the family life is itself, or ought to be, a masterpiece of the nurturer's art. If the home does not continually, in small and unnoticed ways, establish nurturing habits in the young, then it is hardly a home. It might be described as a conspiracy against tomorrow.

The magic words we use so often—"organic," "community," and "natural"—are charged with the indefinable fulfillments which grow out of nurturing. The child who is nurtured, but does not himself learn some of the arts of nurturing, as part of the common lot, is being set up for an exploiter's career. He is allowed to *take for granted* the nurturing hospitality of his environment and to suppose that, whether or not somebody gives them devoted attention, its kindly services will go on and on. If the homes we have do not lend themselves to lessons in nurturing, then the time has come to begin making another sort of home. If the city, a product of exploitation, is the natural enemy of nurturing, then the time has come to plan nuclei of cities which honor nurturing above all. Such cities would probably have natural safeguards to keep them small.

For older children, the intellectual side of nurturing could have attention through the teaching of history. When social nurturing processes turn into schemes to regulate an enslavement which holds people captive for exploitation, then rebellion, revolution, and migration are the result. But unfortunately, the exploited may have already learned the skills of their exploiters. As Berry says:

> The only escape from this destiny of victimization has been to "succeed"—that is, to "make it" into the class of exploiters, and then to remain so specialized and so "mobile" as to be unconscious of the effects of one's life or livelihood. This escape is, of course, illusory, for one man's producer is another's consumer, and even the richest and most mobile will soon find it hard to escape the noxious effluents and fumes of their various public services.

America was very largely settled by displaced and exploited nurturers, who then proceeded to repeat the pattern of their past by displacing the Indians. And then—

> If there is any law that has been consistently operative in American history, it is that the members of any *established* people or group or community sooner or later become redskins—that is, they become the designated victims of an utterly ruthless, officially sanctioned and subsidized exploitation. The colonists who drove off the Indians came to be intolerably exploited by their imperial governments. And that alien imperialism was thrown off only to be succeeded by a domestic version of the same thing; the class of independent small farmers who manned the War of Independence has been exploited by, and recruited into, the industrial society until by now it is almost extinct. The most numerous heirs of the farmers of Lexington and Concord are the little groups scattered all over the country whose names all begin with "Save": Save Our Land, Save the Valley, Save Our Mountains, Save Our Streams, Save Our Farmland. As so often before, these are *designated* victims—without official sanction, often without struggling to preserve their places, their values, their lives as they know them, against agencies of government that are using their own tax monies against them.

Are there any dramatic figures in American history who could represent the successful combination of an adventurous spirit with strong nurturing inclinations? The Founding Fathers might begin such a list. John Wesley Powell should be on it, and also Gifford Pinchot. Arthur Morgan united a career in education and community with engineering innovation that brought him to held the Tennessee Valley Authority. He actually combined engineering with nurturing! Ellen Swallow, whose career reads like an adventure story, was the American founder of the science of ecology and a pioneer in many directions—the first woman student at MIT and its first woman graduate and faculty member. She wrote a dozen books on how to nurture the environment and one another. Her last words to the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the Congress of Technology (in 1911) were: "Do not betray the rank and file."

FRONTIERS

Signal from Spain

WHAT are the tasks of the contemporary historian? Nine years ago, writing in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn, 1967), Louis J. Halle described the difficulty of finding out what is really important to know:

> The closer the historian is to the period with which he is dealing, the harder it is for him to hear the signals for the noise. If he tries to abstract what has historic significance from the reams of stuff he reads in the newspapers every day, he will be unable to do so, because at such close range, the noise drowns out the signals. . . . The ability to distinguish the signals from the noise is what is required of those who write contemporary history.

Are the papers filled with nothing but noise, these days? What, for example, is going on in Spain? The restoration of a Bourbon to the throne is a curious anachronism, but the development of what might become a strong movement for conscientious objection in that country may prove to have far more historic significance. We quote from the January/February WRI *Newsletter:*

> During May, 1975, the national association, "Justicia y Paz," presented the idea of an alternative to military service: the creation of a corps of "volunteers for development." Men and women in this corps at the service of the population would, after two years' work, be excused from their military obligation. (AIthough women are not drafted into the army in Spain, they can volunteer their services in support of this project.) . . . Beginning in August, a group of young men began to live this type of civil service in Can Serra, Hospitalet, a suburb of Barcelona. It is a large barrio enlivened by a tenants' association and a community of active Christians who have had much to contend with, given the lack of social resources and cultural animation, and by the struggle against real estate speculation.
>
> It is within this framework that the young volunteers participated with their neighbors in the construction of a place of worship christened "La Casa de la Reconciliacion" (House of Reconciliation). In August they organized a summer camp, holding workshops with manual laborers and artisans; their works were shown at a neighborhood festival. At the request of several parents, the same sort of activities were organized for the adults generally, and as a result there are now thirty women in an ongoing basketry shop.
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> A kindergarten (of thirty children) was opened at the initiative of mothers participating in their organization. With the help of professors who donated their services, the COs organized training in basic knowledge, literacy, etc., for adults, and also ran a library. At the same time they helped the neighborhood association to set up a club for elderly people in a locale which had been designated for municipal offices. The club and the buffet are run by the COs. They even occupied the house next to the "House of Reconciliation," which belonged to the municipality, installing electricity and water pipes and transforming the house into a communications center. As a challenge to the authorities, they asked the mayor to pay them for their work. They didn't get an answer.
>
> In order to finance these projects, the COs had to accept part-time jobs. Actually, they have nothing in reserve and the project is in a critical financial situation. All this work has taken place in a political ambiance upset by events such as the anti-terrorist law, the death sentences, the death of Franco, and the amnesty campaign. An information campaign has been organized on the level of youth groups and parish communities in Barcelona and elsewhere in Spain.

According to the WRI report, twelve hundred people have signed petitions requesting government recognition of this project. Five of the young men active in the Barcelona group on last Christmas night publicly declared themselves conscientious objectors. The Spanish authorities apparently do not distinguish between war resisters and deserters, since two of these men have been regarded as "deserters" since last October, although they have never been in the army. The other three were scheduled to be drafted January 15.

> At a press conference they proclaimed a manifesto describing their work and demanding the organization of a "voluntary corps for development" and the recognition of the right of conscientious objection. They expressed their hope, encouraging others to refuse military service and preparation for

> war, and to begin instead to create a peaceful world. Sixty thousand copies of this manifesto were distributed, and it was discussed in more than a hundred churches in Barcelona, Madrid, and Bilbao. It was also reprinted in the principal weekly journals.

Since all five men were in violation of the law after Jan. 15, they have been expecting arrest, but no move was made by the government during the week following that date. The report concludes:

> In various regions of Spain groups are forming around the same objective. In Bilbao, six persons have decided to refuse military service. They plan to organize in August, 1976, a civil service [alternative civilian service] like that of the Barcelona group. The first of this group will be drafted in 1977. In the event of arrests in Barcelona, this group intends to have a local solidarity march, with participants dressed in prison garb, carrying placards demanding amnesty and the right to conscientious objection. In Madrid and a number of other cities groups are ready to endorse the objectors. From these, it is hoped, will arise a national campaign for the establishment of a civil service, and for the right of conscientious objection in Spain.

The *WRI Newsletter* also provides this report from England:

> All fourteen supporters of the British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign, charged with a conspiracy to contravene the Incitement to Disaffection Act, were acquitted by a jury on December 10. They had distributed leaflets to soldiers informing them on all possible ways in which soldiers could leave the army. Twelve of these fourteen pacifists, charged under Sec. 2 of the Act with possession of this leaflet, "Some Information for Discontented Soldiers," were also acquitted on this count. John Hyatt (WRI Council member) and Gwyn Williams, charged under the Army Act with concealing a person, knowing him to be a member of Her Majesty's Forces absent without leave, were fined £50 and £100.

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